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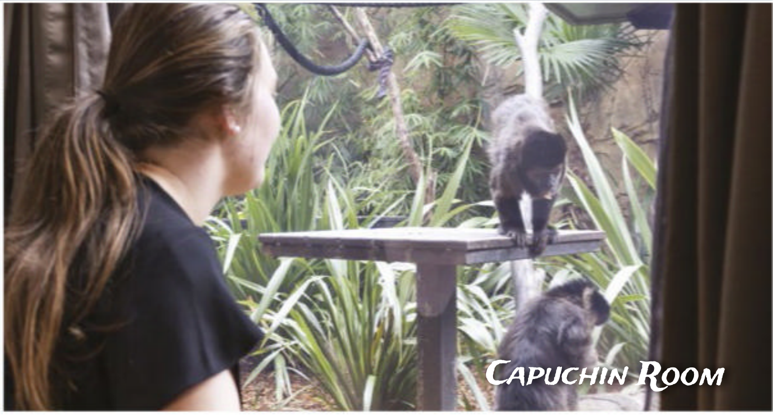

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Time's on your side

It was one of those 'aha' moments... Recently, when interviewing Adelaide-based physiotherapist Rebecca Sabine for our podcast, *Thriving in Menopause*, she talked about the shift in how women see themselves in their 40s and 50s. "They're just not as comfortable in their own skin," she noted.

As a result, she says, women are more likely to become 'observers' in life, rather than participants. She cites the example of 20-somethings running to the beach, throwing their towels down and hitting the water in a flurry of wild splashes and kicks. "We wouldn't think of doing it ourselves," Rebecca said. Instead, we'll likely walk sensibly onto the sand, apply our sunscreen liberally, slip on a hat and sit in the shade... and watch. That physical spontaneity has gone.

Her description rang Big Ben-sized bells in my head. I wonder if it does for you too? Anyone who reads *Prevention* regularly will know we champion women's capacity to live their best life – an active life – at every age. Which is why the beach scene caught me by surprise. And it inspired the theme of this month's issue: Be active, be strong and be happier than ever.

We have an inspiring 15-minute flexibility workout (on page 60), designed to keep you, quite literally, on your toes. And writer Sabrina Rogers-Anderson myth-busts life after 40 in *How to Live Your Best Midlife* (on page 72). Sabrina is part of a Facebook group of women from all over Australia who've created a second act for themselves – a reinvention that ensures their life has more meaning, more satisfaction and more laughs than it did in their 20s and 30s.

As Rebecca reminds us: "We're capable of more than we imagine." So, what are you going to start, or reignite, this month that reinvigorates you? Sabrina's story just may provide you with the inspiration you need.

Enjoy this issue!

Andrea

ANDREA DUVALL
EDITOR

PHOTOGRAPHY (MAIN): JEREMY GREIVE; ISTOCK

Things we're loving...

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Smile as you lean into deeper stretches with this colourful Wild Mingo Joy yoga block, $44, wildmingo.com.au

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TOP OF THE CROP
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BASE COAT
Rug up for a vibrant outdoor adventure in The North Face Denali Jacket in Stone Purple, $320, thenorthface.com.au

this *or* that?

We asked for your views.*
Here's what you said.

Q WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE KIND OF TASTE?

49% **I HAVE A SWEET TOOTH**

35% *Give me savoury food any day!*

11% THERE'S NOTHING LIKE SOME SALTY CHIPS

5% I'm not afraid of sour flavours

Q WHAT'S YOUR SMOOTHIE OF CHOICE?

53% *FRUITY FOR SURE*

27% GO GREEN!

12% **I PREFER A NUTTY OR CHOCOLATE-Y FLAVOUR**

8% Other

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Q MOVIES OR TV SHOWS – WHICH PULLS YOU IN?

65% *I'm always hooked on a new TV show*

35% **MOVIES – PASS THE POPCORN!**

Q DO YOU KEEP A MINDFULNESS JOURNAL?

32% **NO, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO START ONE!**

47% *No, it's not something I'm interested in trying*

21% YES! WRITING THINGS DOWN IS SO HELPFUL

*Results sourced from polls conducted on *Prevention*'s Instagram @preventionaus

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Pulse

MORE JOY, LESS STRESS – FOR A HEALTHIER, HAPPIER YOU

> Why not go out on a limb? That's where all the fruit is.
>
> Mark Twain

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

GOOD-NATURED

Does the sight of a glorious sunrise leave you feeling in awe? Marvelling at natural phenomena can boost your mood and wellbeing, according to a new UK study. And while you may feel a bit brighter on sunny days, the study found that you get an extra jolt of wellbeing from fleeting wonders, such as vivid sunrises, sunsets, rainbows, thunderstorms and starry skies. Tapping into these moments might even become part of what's called 'green prescribing', where nature plays a therapeutic role in mental health treatment. "Our research indicates that getting up a bit earlier for sunrise or timing a walk to catch sunset could be well worth the effort – the 'wow' factor associated with these encounters might unlock significant bumps in feelings of beauty and awe, which could in turn have positive impacts for mental wellbeing," says study lead researcher Dr Alex Smalley.

3 MUST-DO ADVENTURES

That the Lonely Planet swears by!

Got an hour? Harness the wind and go paragliding in Marrakech, Morocco, for a bird's-eye view of golden sand and Berber villages.

Got a day? Stand-up paddleboard on the glassy, glistening waters of the fjords on Norway's west coast. Start from the district of Voss.

Got a week? Learn to tango in Buenos Aires, Argentina. For classes, try the city's Escuela del Tango (escuelatangoba.com).

Prevention AUSTRALIA *Book Club*

MUM JOKES
JESSICA ROWE
Be Here Now
YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

UPLIFTING READS

Mum Jokes

By Jessica Rowe
(Allen & Unwin, $19.99)

Need a laugh? Don't we all! And who better than our cover star and self-confessed @craphousewife Jessica Rowe to tickle your funny bone with a collection of 500 of the most eye-rolling family-friendly jokes, guaranteed to embarrass all kinds everywhere.

Be Here Now

By Meredith Gaston Masnata
(Hardie Grant, $34.99)

If you're feeling lost in the overwhelm of life, take a moment to simply be in your now, treasuring the world just as it is, in all its simplicity and authenticity. Featuring Meredith's gorgeous illustrations and photographs by Roberto Massimo, this book will assist you to relax and enjoy right now, and is sure to become a keepsake.

You Only Live Once

By Lonely Planet
(Lonely Planet, $39.99)

Only have an hour? A day? A week? Let the expert Lonely Planet team inspire you to seize the moment (no matter its duration) and live a life more wonderful with their guide to must-do experiences perfect for the time you have available. (See left for a little taster!)

Scan the QR code to find these great reads and many more of our handpicked favourites at Booktopia.

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

ADVERTISEMENT

Blue Berry has given me a lot of joy

Marianne, 78, is an active lady who loves helping others, cooking and dancing, especially line dancing.

"For me, it is important to maintain good eyes and good eyesight when you get older, so I have the freedom to do all the things I want. I take the Blue Berry™ eye tablet every day. They are absolutely indispensable to me. For me, it's important to keep going, even as I get older. It is the things we do in everyday life that give us the joy of life.

A couple of years ago, my eyes started teasing me. I got a little nervous and had to take matters into my own hands so I could maintain normal vision for as long as possible. I am a supporter of doing it naturally, and was advised to take both blueberries and lutein.

I got Blue Berry tablets from my daughter

My daughter gave me a box of Blue Berry™ tablets. It's the best gift I have received in a long time. I take 2 tablets every morning with my breakfast. They contain blueberries, which are good for eye health, lutein and vitamin A, which help maintain normal vision.

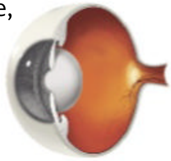
Blue Berry has given me the joy of life back

I was really afraid of being caught in my apartment and waiting for help from others, but I don't have to now. I can now go to my beloved line dance, cook for my grandchildren, meet my friends for coffee and also help others. I will never stop taking Blue Berry, as they have become my "life companion", says Marianne happily.

How to take Blue Berry

Most people start taking Blue Berry™ when they feel their vision is changing, but there is nothing stopping them from starting earlier. The original Swedish Blue Berry™ tablet should not replace the need for a healthy and varied diet, but is a good blueberry tablet with eyebright, and a naturally high content of lutein as well as vitamin A and zinc. Vitamin A and zinc help maintain normal vision. Take two tablets each morning with your breakfast.

Good eyesight is quality of life



Your eyes are busy every day. You read, drive, work in front of the computer or watch television. You are dependent on your eyes and your vision, so it is no wonder that sight matters a lot. Your vision changes as you get older. The reason for this is a deterioration of the eye's ability to focus. As we get older, the lens can harden and often weaken the eye muscles. Our eyes need special nutrients to function.

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Health

THE BEST BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE, MADE SIMPLE

SOWING THE SEED

We've known for years that gardening is good for our health (all that stretching and bending), but new research shows that gardening as a group activity may reduce the risk of chronic illnesses, including cancer, and improve mental health. A new US study examined people who'd never gardened before as they tended a community garden for 90 minutes a week over the course of a year. Compared with the control group, participants' fibre intake and physical activity increased and their perceived levels of stress and anxiety decreased. They also reported feeling more socially connected, leading the researchers to conclude that community gardening has added benefits compared with gardening alone. Find your nearest community garden at communitygarden.org.au

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

RELIEF WALK

Worried your desk job is affecting your wellbeing? While evidence suggests hitting the gym won't undo the negative health effects of prolonged sitting, taking regular walking breaks can. A new study from the US found that five-minute 'exercise snacks' every 30 minutes can counteract the effects of sitting by reducing both blood sugar and blood pressure levels. Need a little push? Set a regular reminder on your phone and take water-refill breaks, walk around the block or go up a couple of flights of stairs.

50 decibels

The healthiest noise level for the office in decibels – comparable to moderate rain.

SOURCE: NATURE DIGITAL MEDICINE

Control panel

Contraceptive breakthroughs don't happen every day, so the development of a dissolving contraceptive film that blocks sperm and STIs is big news. Using antibodies that are grown in a lab from tobacco plants, the film activates the body's natural defence system to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STIs, including the herpes simplex virus and HIV. The groundbreaking dissolvable vaginal patch will be a welcome alternative for women who can't, or prefer not to, take hormonal birth control, but they'll have to be patient. While data from the initial clinical trials is promising, US researchers say it could be another five to 10 years before their work is available to the general public.

Far-sighted

Do your eyes feel tired, sore or itchy after staring at a screen all day? To prevent eye strain, follow the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at an object 20 feet (six metres) away for 20 seconds. Just make sure it's an object and not a person!

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

What's up with… goosebumps?

Here's why your skin sometimes takes on a whole new tingly texture.

BY KAYLA BLANTON

It might occur on a chilly morning, when stepping out of the shower or while you're watching a horror flick… You suddenly feel your skin get bumpy and tingly and the hair on your arms stand straight up. Here's what goosebumps are and why they happen.

WHAT ARE THEY?

● **GOOSEBUMPS HAVE TWO OFFICIAL NAMES:** The first is piloerection, which refers to arrector pili, the tiny muscles that are attached to hair follicles. When they contract, they cause body hair that typically lies at an angle to stand upright, which creates that goosey bump at the site of the follicle. (Sometimes the hair is so fine that all you see is the bump.) The other name, cutis anserina, translates into 'gooseflesh' from Latin and was inspired by the look of raw poultry skin after the feathers are plucked. The bumps are triggered by various stimuli, including temperature and emotions.

WHY DO I GET THEM?

● **BECAUSE OF THE TEMPERATURE** When mammals are cold, goosebumps signal their fur to stand taller, adding insulation and warmth. "Humans don't have enough body hair for goosebumps to protect against cold weather, yet the phenomenon persists," says dermatologist Dr Diya Mutasim.

● **BECAUSE OF EMOTIONS** Goosebumps are also believed to be a fight-or-flight response. When many mammals are threatened or afraid, their hair stands up to make them appear bigger and more intimidating – which is why a scared cat inflates like a balloon (we just get goosebumps, thankfully). Because humans have a wider range of emotions than other animals, we can also get goosebumps when we're aroused or moved by something like hearing a beautiful song or story.

COULD IT BE SOMETHING ELSE?

If you have bumps that don't go away, they might actually be keratosis pilaris (KP), a benign skin condition caused by the build-up of the protein keratin, which plugs up hair follicles, creating 'chicken skin'. KP is very common – 40 to 80 per cent of people get it at some point in their life. Topical creams prescribed by your GP or dermatologist can usually smooth it out.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

PATH TO GLORY

Have your good habits been derailed? Get them back on track in just three days.

It happens to most of us at some point – or points – during the year: One of your good-for-you habits hits a lull (or all of them do!) and you suddenly find that you're not sleeping as well, or you're feeling on edge, or it's harder to get the drive to work out – or all of the above. The reason? It's because many healthy habits are intertwined with total-body wellness:

WORDS: ALYSSA JUNG. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Did you know?

Adding an audio or visual cue (like a song or sweatband) to your new habit can help you make it stick over time.

SOURCE: PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM

Stress or anxiety can mess with your sleep patterns and your motivation to be active, and lack of zzzs and exercise ends up negatively affecting how you feel.

"It's completely normal to fall off a good-habit streak," says Lindsey Benoit O'Connell, a certified strength and conditioning coach. "Ask anyone who's been on holiday or had a streak of abysmal Tuesdays. But you can get back on track at any time, any day." Revive your wellness tools with this three-day challenge.

Day 1 CREATE A STRESS-LESS ACTION PLAN

Stress can really affect your day-to-day life, not to mention your overall health if it becomes chronic. "An action plan may help you deal with it better now and the next time," says psychologist Dr Simira Freeman. Do these three things:

1 Give yourself a pep talk on boundaries. Remind yourself that it's okay to say no. Taking on too much can make you feel overwhelmed, so remembering that you don't always have to say yes helps with balance.

2 Jot down your recharging resources. "These can be social, environmental or spiritual forms of support – whatever you find helps recharge you," says Dr Freeman.

3 Identify your triggers. Make a list of what sets your frazzle meter off – when you notice one of those things happening, it's time to lean on your recharging resources (above).

Day 2 TAKE BACK YOUR SLEEP THE EASY WAY

Spending some time outside each morning can really make a difference, says Dr Sarah Silverman, a behavioural sleep medicine specialist. "Bright light in the morning sets your circadian rhythm, and it can also boost mood and give you energy for the day," she explains. How? Sunlight helps regulate key hormones involved in the sleep-wake cycle. Aim to spend about 15 minutes outside within an hour of waking up. It doesn't matter whether you take a walk, hang out the washing or simply stand still while being mindful – getting out is what counts!

Day 3 REIGNITE YOUR EXERCISE MOJO

First of all, don't beat yourself up. "A lull in your workout routine or lost motivation doesn't mean you've failed," says Lindsey. "Setting mini goals paired with small rewards can go a long way toward busting through those walls."

Now set a few mini goals for the rest of this week (or the upcoming one, depending on what day it is now). You might choose to commit to doing a 10-minute yoga video three times or signing up for a fun workout class and then, when you complete this, enjoying a feel-good prize, from having your favourite coffee to getting those top-end runners you've been eyeing. Keep it going by continuing to write down weekly mini goals in your calendar or journal.

Stressed?

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Unlike most multivitamins which are one size fits all, HIVITA is tailored for your needs and lifestyle - to work most efficiently and effectively whilst saving you money.

EASY TO SWALLOW

HIVITA vegan capsules are much easier to swallow than most traditional tablets. You can even separate the capsules and pour the powder in juice or water if that's your preference. You also don't have the unpleasant strong smell or taste usually associated with tablets. On your demanding, high stress days, you take 2 to 4 capsules. On less demanding days, one or two capsules.

HIVITA HEART

HIVITA is also driven by love of people, planet and philanthropy. That's why 50% of profits go to charity - the group foundation has gifted over $4 million to various charities over the past 5 years to support hospitals, the homeless, those affected by domestic violence and initiatives to combat global warming. We are clean and green in every way - 100% glass bottles, 100% vegan and 100% Australian. It's all about enhancing wellness and delivering 100% happy energy!

HIVITA WELLNESS
WOMEN'S MULTIVITAMIN
MINERALS, ANTIOXIDANTS & HERBS
SUPPORT VITALITY & STAMINA
SUPPORT HEALTHY STRESS RESPONSE IN THE BODY
SUPPORT IMMUNE SYSTEM HEALTH
SUPPORT COLLAGEN HEALTH
120 VEGAN CAPSULES
Trusted For Over 40 Years
HIVITA WELLNESS
MEN'S MULTIVITAMIN
MINERALS, ANTIOXIDANTS & HERBS
SUPPORT VITALITY & STAMINA
SUPPORT HEALTHY STRESS RESPONSE IN THE BODY
SUPPORT IMMUNE SYSTEM HEALTH
SUPPORT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
120 VEGAN CAPSULES
Trusted For Over 40 Years

POWERED BY ASHWAGANDHA

HIVITA is one of the only vegan multivitamins hi in ashwagandha and hi on life!
HIVITA does not contain many fillers, binders and titanium dioxide, which are commonly used in tablet products.

You may feel the HIVITA difference in increased energy and better stress management after regular use. Thank you for considering the Happy Energy brand!

The Happy Energy Brand!
www.hivita.com.au

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Always read the label and follow the directions for use

Fitness

FEELING STRONGER, FITTER AND FIRMER AFTER 40 STARTS HERE

STRONG-HEARTED

Want to boost your heart health? You can stop slogging away in cardio classes and focusing on the number on your scales. According to a new study, published in the journal *Nature*, your muscle mass may play a more important role in keeping your heart healthy. Researchers measured cardio fitness, body composition and arterial stiffness (an early sign of heart disease) in women aged 16 to 58. Surprisingly, higher muscle mass was associated with lower arterial stiffness regardless of body fat percentage, cardio fitness or age. So, start focusing on building your muscles. Weights not your thing? Increase muscle mass with bodyweight exercises, such as Pilates or yoga. Your heart will thank you!

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

SLEEPWORKER

Here's another reason to get enough ZZZs: a good night's rest could help you stick to your exercise goals. US researchers examined whether there was an association between participants' sleep health and how well they adhered to diet and workout modifications in a 12-month weight-loss program. They found that those with healthy sleeping habits – seven to nine hours a night with a regular waking time – attended more group exercise sessions and met their kilojoule intake goals more frequently than those who didn't sleep as well. Ready, set, snooze!

40

The extra minutes of daily exercise you could be motivated to do by simply wearing a fitness tracker.

SOURCE: LANCET DIGITAL HEALTH JOURNAL

Better half

If you never seem able to hit the minimum weekly exercise target of 150 minutes of moderate activity, here's some good news: even half that amount can vastly improve your health. Examining the results of more than 30 million people, British researchers found that one in 10 early deaths could've been prevented if everyone had done 75 minutes of moderate exercise per week. The same amount of activity was also shown to substantially reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. Knowing that 75 minutes of moderate exercise is equivalent to five brisk 15-minute walks per week, improving your health just got a whole lot easier!

Up and at 'em

Feeling blue? Try working out. South Australian researchers say exercise should become a cornerstone of treating depression after a large study review revealed it's one and a half times more effective than counselling or leading medications.

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

ADVERTISEMENT

Is lack of sleep *torturing you?*

Melissa Dream™ is the tablet you need to help maintain a relaxed and restful sleep. A unique formulation – with natural extracts and vitamins.

Disrupted sleep can make you feel miserable – and unrestful and interrupted sleep is becoming ever more common in our hectic, rushed society. When you don't get the proper amount of sleep, you'll often experience dark under-eye circles, pale skin and even noticeable weight gain, because of the increased production of hormones, which make you feel hungry.

BRUTAL TO *the body*

Sleep deprivation results in a slowed rate of healing in the body and it can weaken your immune system. And, as it's so brutal to the body, it's not uncommon for friends and co-workers to wonder if you're all right. Indeed, sleep deprivation is known to be so horrible for people that it's long been recognised as one of the cruellest – and therefore most effective – forms of torture.

SLEEP BETTER AND WAKE UP *refreshed*

To help free yourself from those sleepless nights, try Melissa Dream™ tablets. The lemon balm tablets help you maintain a relaxed, restful sleep.

Why MELISSA DREAM

For centuries, lemon balm (Melissa officinalis) has been a favourite herb with herbalists. Hence the name Melissa Dream™. This scientifically crafted herbal formula is designed to help you sleep better and wake up feeling refreshed without the use of ingredients that make you drowsy.

The lemon balm tablet is fortified with a combination of soothing green tea, chamomile and vitamin B complex. It's high in antioxidants and apigenin and can activate mechanisms that calm nerves and reduce the time to fall asleep. Additionally, the tablet is rich in magnesium, which promotes normal muscular functions, including comfortable night-time muscular function in your legs and shoulders.

My sleep solution
NOW I CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY AGAIN!

Many of us know the anxiety of not being able to sleep through the night. You toss and turn; thoughts and worries are churning in your head. Elin, 62, knew this feeling all too well and so decided to try the new Melissa Dream™ tablets. Elin has had sleeping problems for years and has often woken up several times during the night. "It's really frustrating lying in bed turning and turning, because you can't sleep," she says. "During the day, I had problems concentrating, because I was so tired. I was always running about like a headless chicken, not being able to get anything done – simply because I had too little sleep."

Amazing to wake up from a sound sleep

"Now I feel fantastic. I'm so rested and happy when waking up now and I'm truly on top of things during the daytime and coping with everything. I take the tablets one hour before bed. It really feels amazing to wake up from a sound sleep again!"

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Restful sleep
Reduce time to fall asleep and calm nerves
Lemon balm helps to find sleep
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- INDEPENDENT - Health Food Stores

All TONED UP

Elevate your active gear with vibrant hues and prints.

HEAT IS ON Snuggle up to this must-have collab from Uniqlo x Marni, available from early May. **Uniqlo x Marni Women's PJ Heattech turtleneck, $29.90, and socks (pack of two), $14.90, uniqlo.com/au**

TRAIL MIX These all-weather, all-day hiking boots are made from sustainable materials and will take you from city to bush and back again. **Teva Geotrecca Mid Balsam Burlowood, $280, au.teva.com**

ROSY VIEW Combat glare with these chic sunnies. **AM Eyewear Solange LTD Edition, $280, ameyewear.com**

SIMPLE STEPS Gloomy weather getting you down? Conjure up a sense of spring with these premium Scandi-inspired kicks. **Ecco Soft 7 sneakers, $269.95, au.ecco.com**

SMOOTH RUN Choose medium-weight, seam-free support for frictionless movement. Best bit? Adjustable straps for a good fit and easy removal! **Bonds Move Seamless Bralette, $46.99, bonds.com.au**

GIVE ME FIVE! Wear this weatherproof outer jacket/inner adjustable down vest five different ways to carry you through the cold. **Kathmandu Benmore 5-in-1 jacket, $649.98, kathmandu.com.au**

CROSS COUNTRY A pretty crossbody pouch perfect to fit the essentials needed for a day spent wandering. **Bee Leather Co Maya Blue bag, $149, beeleatherco.com**

COMPILED BY DONNAY TORR

easy

Breathing is a tool you can use to control everything, from blood pressure and immunity to anxiety levels. Inhale these tips today!

While it's true that no one has ever had to teach you to inhale and exhale, it's also true that both science and experience tell us that retraining yourself to breathe better can improve your life. Over the page, we dig a little deeper and show you a few ways to enhance your breathing technique as well as your wellbeing. ►

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Did you know?

It's estimated that about 30 to 50 per cent of adults breathe through their mouth.

SOURCE: DENTAL LOGIC

Mouth breathing is associated with a number of ills, including insomnia, sleep apnoea, snoring, allergies, congestion, gas and bloating (from sipping air while you're also chomping on food), higher blood pressure and even poor dental health. Indeed one study found that mouth breathers had more plaque and the type of bacteria that causes cavities. Jaw and neck stiffness are also common in people who inhale through their mouth.

Humans were intended to primarily breathe through their nose. When it comes to filtering out bacteria and infectious bugs, humidifying the body and warming up air so it slides more easily through the bronchial tubes, nose breathing easily beats mouth breathing. Another benefit of breathing through your nose is that you're going to be more likely to take spacious, torso-expanding breaths. These kinds of breaths reach into the lower depths of the lungs, where they turn on the parasympathetic nervous system. So, it's calming.

A large part of becoming a better breather is simply noticing when you're holding your breath or when you're bringing in quick, shallow wisps of air. These exercises (at right) are designed not only to change your habitual style of breathing, but also to create physiological change in the body.

MORNING SPIN-UP

Treat this breath practice like a skill session. You're basically using your breathing to improve the range of motion in your ventilation systems. Set a timer for two minutes. While sitting on a chair, cross-legged on the floor or even lying down, take a full breath in through your nose, expanding your chest, ribs and belly. Treat each breath like it's going to be a record inhale! Relax and exhale fully, saying "huh" as you release the air (don't blow). Don't pause between your exhales and inhales. Repeat for two minutes. Now repeat the practice, only this time exhale fully and then hold as long as possible without inhaling. When you feel the need to breathe, inhale and repeat for another two minutes. Alternate these sequences as many times as you desire. A nice bonus: If you do three to five rounds, you've just worked your way into a meditation practice!

TRUNK MOBILISATION

If you're wound up, hassled, worried about your family, your job, your health, hit this mobilisation technique. What makes it so effective at combating stress is that it stimulates the vagus nerve (which runs from the brain to the abdomen) through both outside physical pressure and the act of breathing. That shifts the body into parasympathetic ('rest and digest') territory and provides a calming effect. Lie facedown on the floor atop a roller or larger ball (like a volleyball) placed just below your ribs and pressing on your abdomen, arms in front of you. Inhale through your nose for four seconds, hold your breath for four seconds and contract your abdominals. Then exhale for five or more seconds as you relax your trunk. Take a big breath or two in between contract and relax cycles. Next, move side to side on the roller/ball as you breathe slowly in and out. If you find an area that's stiff or 'off' while on the spot, contract the muscles there as you breathe in for four seconds and then relax for eight seconds as you breathe out. Repeat as many times as needed for a maximum 10 minutes.

NOSE-BREATHING WALK

By doing this exercise as you get your daily steps in, the more oxygen you'll be able to utilise. It's going to help you sleep better, and it'll also help you get more out of your walks. You may want to do the breathing part for only a portion of your stroll, which is fine, too. Just try to work up to doing it for the entire time. As you begin your walk, breathing through your nose only, take the longest, slowest inhale you can take for about 10 seconds. Hold the breath for as long as you can as you continue walking and then exhale slowly through your nose. Repeat every one to two minutes depending on your tolerance.

What are the health benefits of breathing in fresh air?

It not only cleans your lungs, but also lowers your heart rate, boosts your mood (the more oxygen, the more of the 'happy hormone' serotonin) and increases energy levels. So, make sure you get outside for regular breaks. **P**

Edited extract from *Built to Move* by Kelly Starrett and Juliet Starrett (Orion, $34.99).

BUILT
TO
MOVE
KELLY STARRETT & JULIET STARRETT

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Reduces mental fatigue
Eases nervous exhaustion
Support healthy memory
60
NATURE'S HELP
MENO GLOW
AGE WELL
Body regeneration NAD+
Nicotinamide Riboside (NR)
Maintains optimal metabolism
Supports longevity
60
NATURE'S HELP
MENO COOL
HOT FLUSHES
Reduces symptoms of hot flushes
Decreases symptoms of mood swings
Reduces vaginal dryness
Maintains healthy adrenal gland function
60
NATURE'S HELP
MENO CALM
STRESS & ANXIETY
Reduces symptoms of mild anxiety
Supports healthy emotions and mood
Relieves symptoms of nervous stomach
Reduces restless sleep
30
NATURE'S HELP
MENO FEMIN
LIBIDO & BODY HEALTH
Female aphrodisiac
Promotes increased vitality
Reduces sugar cravings
Helps maintain a healthy body weight
60
NATURE'S HELP
MENO SLEEP
NIGHT FORMULA
Induces sleep
Reduces restlessness
Reduces time to fall asleep
Decreases nervous exhaustion
60

Created for women, by women

Hello ladies, my name is Kirsty and I am the founder of Nature's Help. I am excited to share with you my new range called the Menopause Collection, the first all natural evidence based range of supplements created for women by women, formulated to help alleviate various menopausal symptoms.

"What makes us different?" First of all, as women, we are all uniquely different, so there is no one size fits all magic pill. The Menopause collection offers women the freedom to choose targeted products to match their changing symptoms througout their menopause journey. Nature's Help has offered a range of natural female health and well-being supplements to Australian women since 2012 and I invite you to join us at www.natureshelp.com.au

Kirsty Strowger

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NATURE'S HELP

Nutrition

BETTER HEALTH, MORE ENERGY AND USEFUL, EXPERT-APPROVED ADVICE ON A PLATE

Breaking free

Have a sweet tooth? We hear you! So, here's some interesting findings. Paying attention to the types of sugars and carbs you eat could protect your heart, reveals a new international study. Consuming free sugars – including added sugars in lollies, chocolate and cakes, and also those naturally present in honey and fruit juice – was found to be associated with a higher risk of heart disease and stroke. But, when free sugars were replaced with naturally occurring sugars, found in fruits (the whole fruit, not the juice), vegetables and dairy products, the risk of heart disease and stroke was reduced. The researchers also discovered that increasing fibre intake and replacing refined starch (found in white bread and biscuits) with wholegrain starch (present in wholemeal bread and pasta) may have a protective effect against these diseases. Time to make some smart sugar swaps!

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Need we say moreish?

If you've ever wondered why chocolate feels so good as it melts in your mouth, here's why. Scientists analysed the physical process that takes place when we eat the cocoa-based treat and discovered that the irresistible sensation comes from the fatty film that's released when chocolate comes in contact with the tongue. Because the fat deeper in the chocolate plays a limited role, the researchers believe their findings could be used to develop luxury chocolate with a lower fat content. The next-generation delicacy would be healthier without compromising on texture or sensation. Now that's technology we can all get behind!

70%

The amount of sugar Australia's science agency, CSIRO, will remove from fruit juice with new technology.

SOURCE: CSIRO

Avo nice life

Avocado lovers, rejoice! Eating up to two avos a day can reduce both total and LDL (bad) cholesterol without causing weight gain or an increase in body fat, shows a new review of scientific literature. Not only can the 1.5 million Aussies suffering from high cholesterol improve their heart health by increasing their intake of this creamy greenie, they can also reduce their risk of type 2 diabetes, improve their skin and boost their energy. Guacamole, anyone?

App your intake

Struggle to eat enough fruit and vegies? The new Smart 5-A-Day app (by Vers Creative UK) could help you get the minimum five daily serves of fruit and vegetables, recommended by the World Health Organization, to reduce the risk of several chronic diseases. Download it today from Google Play.

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Raw power

Next time a sushi craving hits, follow this checklist for the healthiest option.

Sushi can be a delicious and healthy choice, but it's important to pick the right rolls and toppings to make sure you're getting the most nutrients for your kilojoule intake. Here's how.

1. First, when choosing rolls, opt for those with more vegies and fewer fried ingredients. Rolls like cucumber, avocado and asparagus are low in kilojoules and high in nutrients. Avoid rolls with cream cheese, fried tempura pieces or mayo-based sauces.

2. Cooked white rice is one of the staple ingredients of sushi. While carbs help fill you up, stop energy dips later in the day and feed your gut bacteria, brown rice is a better choice than white as it provides longer-lasting energy.

3. Sushi can be high in sodium, so keep salt intake low by limiting soy sauce, miso soup and teriyaki meats. Just one little packaged 'fish' of soy sauce can add about 300mg of sodium to your meal, so three of them equals half your sodium intake for the day. Instead, opt for wasabi and ginger for extra flavour.

4. Pay attention to your portion size. Try to stick to one or two rolls or about 6–8 pieces of sushi.

SOME HEALTHY PICKS

Fresh sashimi and seaweed salad pack
1096kJ (262cal), 4.5g fibre, 115mg sodium
Vegetarian hand roll
623kJ (149cal), 2.3g fibre, 289mg sodium
Fresh salmon hand roll
702kJ (168cal), 4g fibre, 231mg sodium

ADDITIONAL TEXT: BROOKE DELFINO. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Did you know?

Households with their own vegie patch consume 40 per cent more fruit and vegies per day than those who don't.

SOURCE: BENENDEN HOSPITAL

Grow your own superfoods

Late autumn is still a great time for planting. Here's how to reap the health benefits of homegrown fruit and veg – and save money at the same time!

BY KATE LANGRISH

Move over, açaí, goji berries and chia seeds – you don't need expensive fruit and vegies flown in from all over the world to boost your health. In fact, many garden-variety favourites are just as worthy of 'superfood' status. Best of all, you can easily grow these unsung food heroes yourself. You'll reap the mental health benefits of tending to your own crops and you'll also end up with a more nutrient-dense meal. While supermarket suppliers often pick underripe produce to lengthen its shelf life, growing your own means you can harvest it when both flavour and vitamins are at their peak. Here's what to get growing now and what they can do for your wellbeing.

EYE-PROTECTING CARROTS

Carrots can help maintain your eyesight. They contain pigments called carotenoids, two of which – lutein and zeaxanthin – are thought to help protect the retina from damage caused by UV light. One study found that people who ate the most lutein and zeaxanthin were 40 per cent less likely to have advanced age-related macular degeneration, an eye disease that can cause blindness. Carrots are also rich in beta-carotene, from which the body makes vitamin A: essential for good vision.

GROW YOUR OWN No room for a vegie patch? Grow shorter varieties in large pots instead.

METABOLISM-BOOSTING CHILLIES

There's growing scientific interest in the role chillies might play in weight management. Capsaicin – the compound that gives chilli its spice – is thought to help control appetite and also bump up the number of kilojoules that your body burns. One study found capsaicin may heighten feelings of fullness, while others suggest eating chillies raises body temperature, increasing the amount of energy your body uses. Much of the capsaicin is in the seeds, so, if you can stand the heat, don't ditch them before cooking!

GROW YOUR OWN They like heat and humidity, so try a pot of chilli on a sunny windowsill or porch.

BEETROOT FOR STAMINA

A review of more than 20 studies showed that drinking beetroot juice can boost endurance and stamina when working out. Scientists believe it's down to their high nitrate content. When eaten, they're converted to nitric oxide, which can help improve blood flow to the muscles.

GROW YOUR OWN Beetroot can be eaten at any size, with baby beets ready from about 10 weeks after sowing. Sow outdoors all year round in warmer climates and from July to March in temperate regions. And don't forget to eat the leaves, which are nutrient packed and low in kilojoules, too.

HEART-HEALTHY TOMATOES

Tomatoes contain large amounts of vitamins C and E, as well as beta-carotene, which all support heart health. But scientists are increasingly interested in lycopene, the pigment that gives tomatoes their vibrant red colour. It's thought to help strengthen the walls of blood vessels, lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease. Research shows that the biggest tomato eaters have a 20 per cent lower risk of stroke.

GROW YOUR OWN For the highest levels of lycopene, choose a bright red cherry variety. They can be grown all year round, but are best in autumn and winter. Always leave tomatoes on the plant for as long as possible, or store them on the worktop, where they'll increase their lycopene content as they ripen.

IMMUNE SUPPORT FROM GARLIC

Garlic has long been used in herbal medicine to help fight colds and other infections, and science is beginning to understand more about its antimicrobial, antifungal and antiviral properties. These are thought to stem from the compound allicin, which gives garlic its pungent taste and smell, and has been shown to fight bacteria and viruses in lab experiments.

GROW YOUR OWN Most garlic varieties are best planted in late autumn or early winter. Bulbs are ready to harvest when the leaves turn yellow, but, before they do, the delicious green leaves can be used in salads or as scatter herbs. **P**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

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Beauty

FAST, EASY WAYS TO LOOK AS GOOD AS YOU FEEL

Headstrong

Want firmer, smoother skin and a healthier-looking complexion? Then give your face a workout. That's right, weighted tools, skincare that gives you a 'power lift' and treatments that engage your facial muscles, are on the rise. Last year, Mecca opened its first FaceGym Studio in Sydney, offering facial workouts (think intensive deep-tissue sculpting facial massage) alongside face fitness products including weighted balls (to release tension) and hardworking skincare. Meanwhile, EmFace, a world-first treatment launched into salons earlier this year, delivers 20,000 facial muscle contractions in 20 minutes to lift, tighten and reduce wrinkles. "EmFace adds tone to the muscle so that the wrinkles disappear – treating the root cause," explains dermatologist Dr Ritu Gupta from Platinum Dermatology in Sydney. Results last about a year and a course of four treatments are required. Though, at about $1000 per session, it's like a premium gym membership for your face. Prefer a DIY facial massage? See page 36 for the lowdown.

WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

INTI-MATES

It's the last bastion of wellbeing to go mainstream. The era of shame-free sexual self-care is here. Intimate products are now on sale everywhere from David Jones and Mecca to online retailers The Iconic and Beauty Heaven. From silky lubricants formulated with skincare ingredients to intimate moisturisers and sleek sexual devices, you can now add pleasure to your cart with the same ease as you buy your facewash. And, as research shows that orgasms can improve the appearance of your skin (due to increased circulation), there's never been a better time to love yourself. Don't know where to start?

Try these:

LOVERS ETERNAL LOVE LUBE This silky gynaecologist-formulated lubricant contains black cohosh, avocado oil and vitamin E for intense hydration to support symptoms of perimenopause and menopause. **$74, loversproducts.com.au**

MY ILO BALM LUBE This plant-based whipped lubricant contains hydrating shea butter, coconut and extra virgin olive oils, aloe vera and vitamin E. **$34, my-ilo.com**

LOVE HONEY MON AMI BULLET MASSAGER Strong vibrations for versatile use with a whisper-quiet motor make this waterproof device the perfect mini massager. **$54.95, davidjones.com (online only)**

4

That's how many months you should keep a mascara before binning it. A closed, wet tube is a breeding ground for eye-infecting bacteria!

SOURCE: HEALTH.COM

MOMENT OF TOOTH

Could artificial intelligence revolutionise your smile? Just ask world leader in microscope-enhanced dentistry Dr Gamer Verdian from Dental Lounge in Sydney, the first clinic in Australia to offer 3D face scanning that tailor-designs veneers to complement your features. More incredible advances are coming: Stem cells that rebuild dentin, robotic root canals and laser technology in place of drills. These may sound like science-fiction, but the technology exists. "We're truly at the forefront of digital dentistry technology," says Dr Verdian. Say 'Aaahh'.

Fading star

Ever wished you could fade out permanent hair colour more quickly? Or tone down intensity until it's just right? You can with the new Keracolor Fade Effect Colour Fading Shampoo ($34.95, i-glamour.com), which lifts out dye pigments while supporting hair health with keratin, biotin and coconut oil. Never fear a dodgy dye job again!

WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Kind & mighty

Treat yourself to some eco-conscious picks that nourish and brighten your skin.

BY CECILY-ANNA BENNETT

ROSEFIRE
Eau de Parfum
Hermetica
PARIS

ERE PEREZ WILD TOMATO RICHE CRÈME Hydrate thirsty skin with this rich cream, packed with tomato seed oil, hyaluronic acid and cocoa butter. **$62, ereperez.com**

BALI BODY
CLARINS
PARIS
Double Serum
Light Texture

BALI BODY ANTIOXIDANT BODY WHIP This vegan whipped lotion contains nourishing shea butter and soothing aloe vera. **$28.95, bali bodyco.com**

FOREO LUNA 4 BODY MASSAGING BODY BRUSH Massage, exfoliate and deeply cleanse pores with this silicone, cruelty-free body brush. **$229, currentbody.com.au**

HERMETICA PARIS ROSEFIRE EAU DE PARFUM This sustainable fragrance is the perfect mix of floral notes with subtle spices and zesty, fruity citrus. **$199, libertine parfumerie.com.au**

CLARINS DOUBLE SERUM LIGHT TEXTURE With 21 potent plant extracts from organic and fair-trade ingredients, this light serum protects and nourishes skin like a dream. **$170, myer. com.au**

INIKA ORGANIC KAKADU PLUM VITAMIN C BOOSTER Brighten dullness, even skin tone and fade pigmentation with this potent antioxidant serum. **$79, inikaorganic.com**

INIKA
ORGANIC
KAKADU PLUM
Vitamin C Booster

TANGENT GC TULIP HAND CREAM Crafted from pure vegetable lipids, this vegan cream leaves hands feeling soft and beautifully scented. **$29, libertine parfumerie.com.au**

TGC206
TULIP
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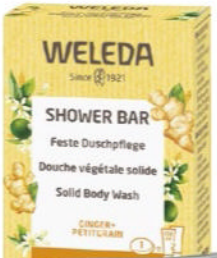
INNISFREE GREEN TEA SEED SERUM This lightweight serum contains niacinamide, hyaluronic acid and green tea for a healthy skin microbiome. **$42, au.innisfree.com**

innisfree
GREEN TEA SEED
SERUM

WELEDA GINGER + PETITGRAIN SHOWER BAR Containing organic shea butter, this biodegradeable body bar leaves skin soft, cleansed and smelling divine. **$9.95, weleda.com.au**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Solid Body Wash

Protini™ Polypeptide Cream
Crème aux polypeptides

DRUNK ELEPHANT PROTINI POLYPEPTIDE CREAM Revive your skin instantly with this peptide- and antioxidant-rich cream. **$113, mecca.com.au**

GROWN ALCHEMIST AGE-REPAIR GEL MASQUE Hyaluronic acid, glycerin, antioxidants and botanicals help to soothe, plump and hydrate dry skin. **$82, David Jones**

GROWN ALCHEMIST

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Knead to know

Give your skin the glow of good health with this simple facial massage technique.

For skin that appears tighter, firmer and rosier, make a few minutes of gentle face kneading a part of your skincare regimen. It increases blood circulation and helps drain excess fluid, says make-up artist Monika Blunder. Before you begin, "pat on a facial oil or serum," she says. "Your skin needs some slip so you're not tugging on it." You can use a facial roller tool or your own two hands, "but always massage upward, never down toward the ground, to help create a lifted effect," explains Monika. "And don't be afraid to use a moderate amount of pressure – enough to get the blood moving but not so much that you're pulling and stretching the skin." Try her technique (right) whenever you need a complexion pick-me-up:

1 Using the sides of your index fingers, start at each side of your nose and smooth your fingers out along your orbital bones (eye sockets) until you reach your temples. Repeat five to 10 times.

2 Holding your index and middle fingers together, press and glide up along each cheekbone, again working toward your temples. Repeat five to 10 times.

3 With these same fingers, massage upward along your jawline, starting from your chin back to below your ears. Repeat five to 10 times.

4 Finish by using the same fingers to gently knead your forehead from your eyebrows up to your hairline. Repeat five to 10 times. Ahh, feel that relaxation...

Fresh faces

Smooth, sculpt and depuff with these easy-to-use tools.

REVLON FACIAL ROLLER Keep this double-ended jade roller in the fridge to depuff and refresh. The smaller roller is perfect for under eyes. **$22.95, myer.com.au**

RETREATMENT BOTANICS ROSE QUARTZ GUA SHA Boost circulation and relieve facial tension with this luxurious massaging tool. **$34, biome.com.au**

CONTOUR CUBE MINI This clever ice massager allows you to freeze any liquid, from water to your favourite serum, and use it to contour, reduce puffiness and enhance radiance. **$29.99, Priceline**

WORDS: VICTORIA KIRBY. ADDITIONAL WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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I'm bragging about my HAIR

I take Hair Volume™ every day. It helps give me visibly thicker, more beautiful and shinier hair. I get lots of positive comments about my hair looking fuller. It's far beyond my expectations.

Anne had thin hair

Anne is 50 years old and works as a clinic secretary. "I have very fine Scandinavian hair, which had lost its fullness. It made it difficult to style. My hairstyle wasn't the same anymore and I wasn't happy with my hair at all. It made me sad."

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SKINCARE

If you only do *one thing* every day...

... then moisturise! Aside from applying SPF, hydration is essential, even for oily and acne-prone complexions, experts say. The key is choosing the right formula for your skin type. So, we've asked a few top dermatologists for their best tips to get the most out of your moisturiser and ensure a radiant complexion at any age.

Why is moisturising so important?

"Our day-to-day life – including exposure to dirt, oil, air pollution and stress – can irritate skin and contribute to accelerated ageing," says dermatologist Dr Fatima Fahs. "Moisturising regularly gives skin a chance to repair and reset, provides needed hydration and can also help reduce the appearance of wrinkles and signs of ageing by improving elasticity."

WORDS: APRIL FRANZINO. ADDITIONAL WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

What an effective moisturiser looks like

Moisturising lotions and creams are emulsions of oil and water (along with other ingredients for nourishing, treatment and product preservation) that help replenish hydration, keeping moisture in skin and preventing dryness. But some perform better than others because of their formulations. Beauty research scientists recommend choosing face moisturisers that contain these key categories of skincare ingredients for optimal efficacy, whatever your needs or skin type.

EMOLLIENTS are hydrating ingredients, such as plant oils, squalane, fatty acids and triglycerides, that moisturise and soften. "They lightly coat skin, smoothing dry texture," explains beauty chemist Danusia Wnek.

HUMECTANTS draw moisture into the skin from the environment or skin's deeper layers. Common examples include glycerin and hyaluronic acid.

OCCLUSIVES form a barrier over skin to lock in hydration and prevent moisture loss. They can include waxes (synthetic or derived from plants or beeswax), plant butters (like shea and cocoa butter), petrolatum and silicones.

FIND THE BEST FORMULA FOR YOUR SKIN

DRY SKIN	Instead of lotions, seek out richer creams, Danusia recommends – they're usually made with more occlusive ingredients.
OILY OR ACNE-PRONE SKIN	Formulas labelled 'noncomedogenic' or 'oil-free' are less likely to clog pores, Danusia says. Lean toward lotions or gels, which generally are thinner and lighter than creams. For acne-treatment products, be sure the label lists an active ingredient, like benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid.
COMBINATION SKIN	Opt for more lightweight formulations, such as lotions, and use creams on dry areas, such as the cheeks, as needed, Dr Fahs suggests.
SENSITIVE SKIN	Choose products labelled 'hypoallergenic', which claim to be made without ingredients that are potential irritants (these can include fragrance and alcohol). Look for words like 'calming', 'soothing', 'redness-reducing' and 'anti-redness' on the packaging.

APPLICATION 101

For maximum benefits, apply moisturiser to clean skin daily (in the morning and/or evening as needed for your skin type), after any other skincare treatment products, like serums. Be sure to cover your entire face, including the areas around your eyes, nose and mouth, and "don't forget to smooth it down to your neck," says Dr Fahs. Try massaging in the lotion or cream. "This will increase its absorption and effectiveness and also improve circulation," advises dermatologist Dr Dendy Engelman.

Our picks

FOR DRY SKIN
KIEHL'S ULTRA FACIAL CREAM
Squalane, glycerin and glacial glycoprotein provide long-lasting hydration in a light-textured cream. **$58, kiehls.com.au**

FOR OILY SKIN
QV FACE OIL FREE MOISTURISER
This moisturiser provides effective hydration without clogging pores. It also has a matt finish to minimise shine. **$17.49, Chemist Warehouse**

FOR COMBINATION SKIN
AUSTRALIAN SKIN INSTITUTE ALL DAY HYDRATION
This lightweight cream, rich in vitamin B3, hyaluronic acid and zinc, moisturises and protects. **$69, australianskininstitute.com.au**

FOR SENSITIVE SKIN
AVÈNE HYDRANCE LIGHT CREAM
This hypoallergenic moisturiser is ideal for combination and sensitive skin. **$57.99, Chemist Warehouse** P

TUNE IN NOW!

Welcome to our popular podcast, Thriving in Menopause, brought to you by the editors of Prevention. Be sure to subscribe today.

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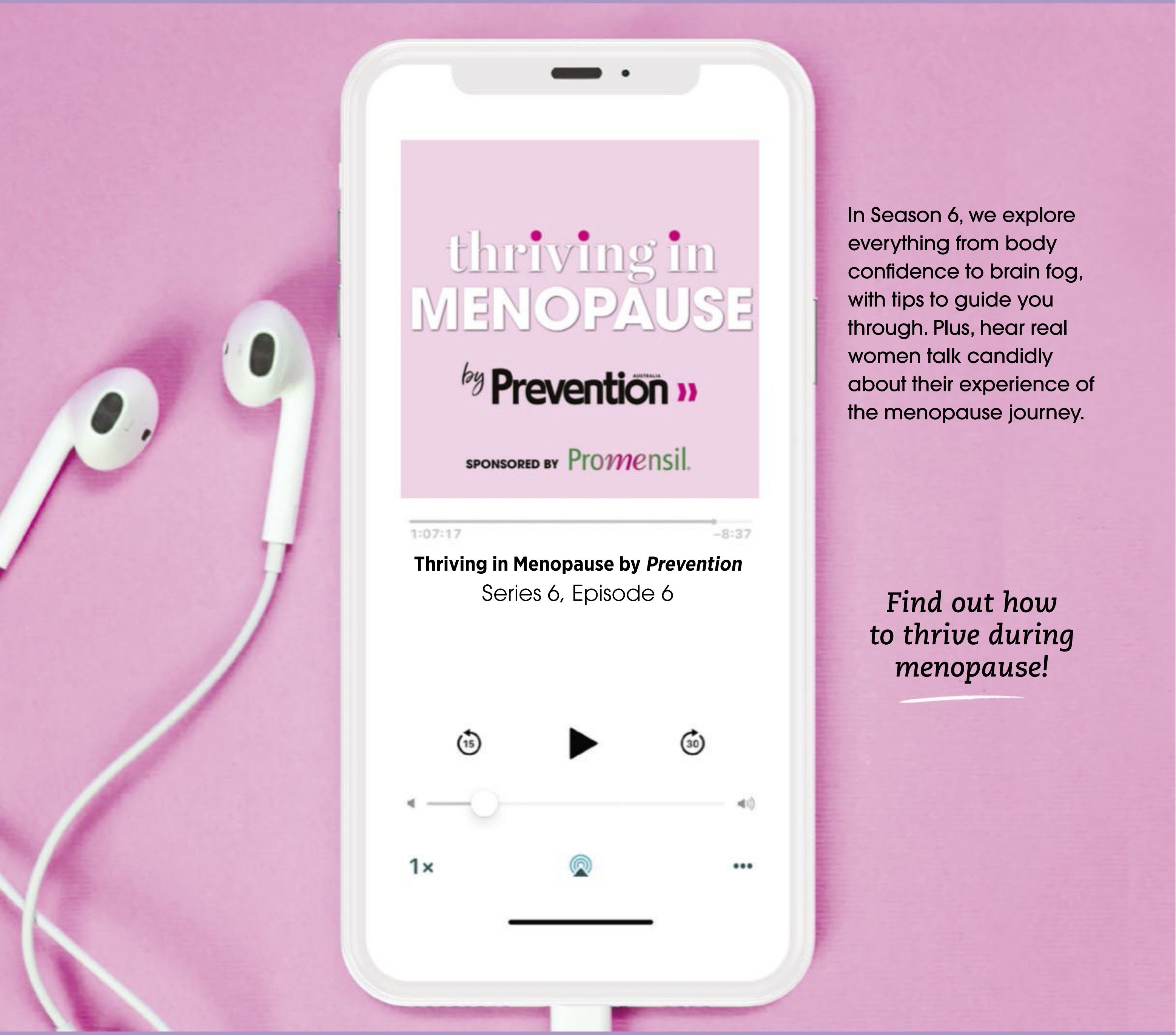
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In Season 6, we explore everything from body confidence to brain fog, with tips to guide you through. Plus, hear real women talk candidly about their experience of the menopause journey.

Find out how to thrive during menopause!

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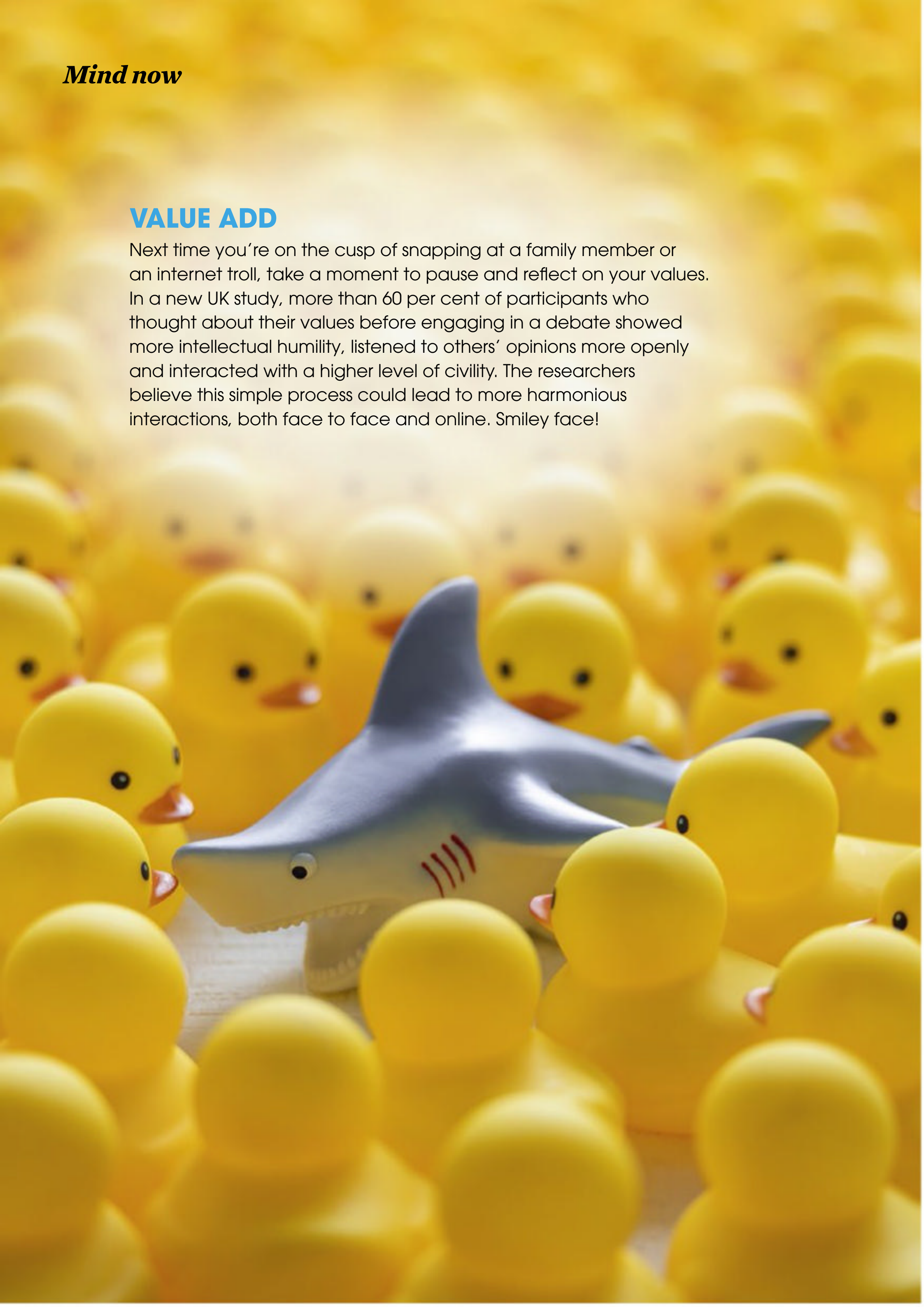
Mind

SMART WAYS TO STAY SHARP, CALM AND POSITIVE

IT'S IN THE BLOOD

An innovative blood test for anxiety, developed by US researchers, could provide new hope for the one in three Australian women who experience the condition in their lifetime. The test examines biomarkers (or molecules) found in the blood to assess someone's risk of developing anxiety as well as the severity of their existing stress. It'll allow doctors to suggest customised treatment methods – including therapy, lifestyle changes and medication – based on a patient's biology. Not only will this personalised approach to anxiety treatment improve its effectiveness, but it could also help reduce the use of addictive one-size-fits-all anxiety medications. The test is still being developed for use by GPs, so stay tuned!

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK



VALUE ADD

Next time you're on the cusp of snapping at a family member or an internet troll, take a moment to pause and reflect on your values. In a new UK study, more than 60 per cent of participants who thought about their values before engaging in a debate showed more intellectual humility, listened to others' opinions more openly and interacted with a higher level of civility. The researchers believe this simple process could lead to more harmonious interactions, both face to face and online. Smiley face!

Cancel culture

Need to nix plans with a friend because you have a hot date with Netflix? In a new study, 80 per cent of people said having plans cancelled wouldn't affect their friendship, but they'd be upset if they found out the friend lied. Time to admit your TV addiction, perhaps?

100

The number of annual volunteering hours shown to alleviate loneliness in older adults.

SOURCE: JOURNAL OF GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK

Negative proof

Feeling cranky or blue? It's the perfect time to proofread that big report! A study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Communication*, found that we pay more attention to detail when we're in a negative mood. Participants who were shown the sad movie *Sophie's Choice* before filling out a survey picked up more inconsistencies in sentences than those who watched funny episodes of *Friends*. According to the researchers, our brain processes language differently when we're in a bad mood and causes us to be more analytical and critical. So, next time you stub your toe or have a row, harness that grumpy energy to polish up that important document you've been putting off.

WORDS: SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Bed bugs

It's 2am and your brain is racing... again. Here are a few culprits, plus some surprising ways to power down.

Common sleep STOPPERS

BATHROOM OR HALLWAY LIGHT

Light increases your alertness (as it can interfere with your biological clock and restrict the amount of melatonin you produce), so brush your teeth and scrub off any make-up in semi-darkness. And if you get up at night to pee, don't flick the light on – just slowly feel your way around.

ALCOHOL AND NICOTINE

Booze is a short-acting sedative, so, while you may crash after drinking, you'll wake when it dissipates after a few hours. (Liquor also worsens sleep apnoea.) And while a nightly smoking ritual might feel relaxing to you, nicotine actually revs up your brain.

TOO MUCH TV

Watching more than four hours of evening TV can make it tough to sleep, found a recent study in the journal *Psychiatry Research*. And viewing upsetting news late at night can be anxiety inducing, so don't get drawn in. You should avoid all devices in the 30 minutes leading up to bedtime.

Surprising sleep SAVERS

HYPNOSIS

"You are getting sleepy" is not just a stage act. In a review of 24 studies, more than half of insomniacs found that when they put themselves into a trance, it helped them catch more zzzs. A phone app, like Sleep Well Hypnosis, will bring the hypnotist right to your nightstand.

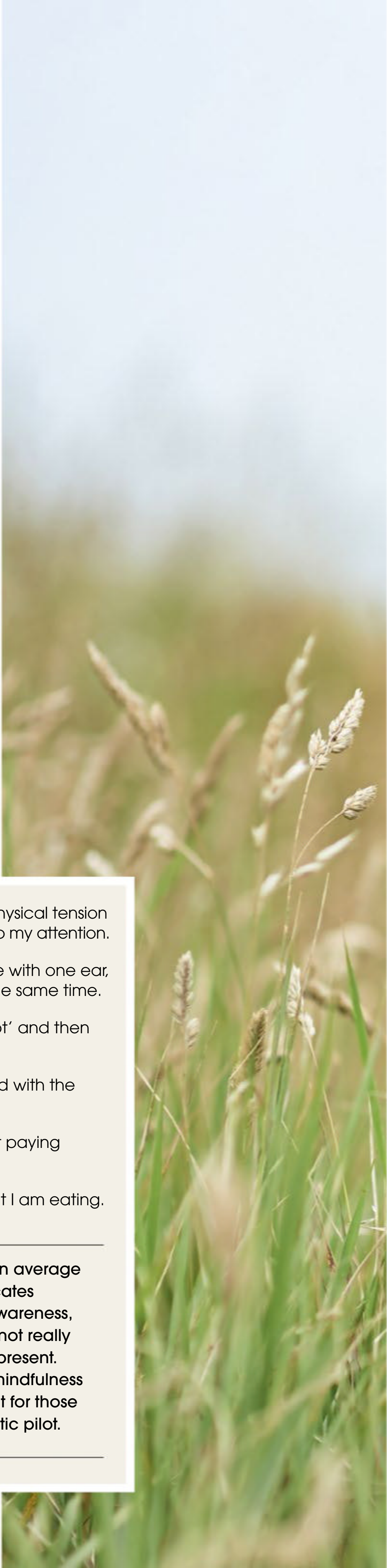
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Tensing and releasing each muscle group calms the mind and relaxes muscles. Focus on your breath – inhale, exhale, repeat. "Doing this redirects the part of your brain that wants to stay active," says sleep expert Dr Nancy Collop.

PRUNES!

The dried plums are packed with magnesium, B6 and calcium, which help produce the 'sleepy hormone' melatonin. Eat two or three about an hour before lights out; more may have you running to the bathroom instead of to bed, notes dietitian Lauren Harris-Pincus, so go easy!

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK



How good are you at mindfulness?

Do you try to immerse yourself in the present, or instead let your brain get distracted with other things? Mindfulness can not only help reduce anxiety but also boost your wellbeing. Find out how mindful you really are.

It's possibly not something you've really considered. You've probably never thought you needed to do it. But take the following assessment (below), called the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (it was developed by two psychology professors in the US), and give yourself a score from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never) for each statement. Once you know your mindfulness level, read on to learn what you can do to get the most out of it.

☐ I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later.

☐ I often break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention or thinking of something else.

☐ I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.

☐ I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.

☐ I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.

☐ It seems as if I'm 'running on automatic' without much awareness of what I'm doing.

☐ I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.

☐ I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.

☐ I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.

☐ I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.

☐ I find myself listening to someone with one ear, while doing something else at the same time.

☐ I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there.

☐ I tend to find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.

☐ I find myself doing things without paying attention.

☐ I snack without being aware that I am eating.

Now add up your scores, then get an average by dividing by 15. A high score indicates attentiveness and a more present awareness, while a low score shows that you're not really mindful of what's happening in the present. Everyone can benefit from regular mindfulness practice, but it's especially important for those who tend to live their life on automatic pilot.

GETTING INTO MINDFULNESS

You don't have to spend months in an ashram in India to begin a life-altering meditation practice. You can do mindfulness anywhere and at any time. If you walk part of the way to work or spend some of your day each week doing the housework, you can even utilise that time.

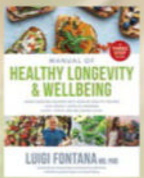
When you're getting started, it's great to find a nice quiet place with no distractions, and to set aside the same time each day so that you get into a routine. It might be before you start your day or after you've had a shower in the evening. Sit on a comfortable chair or lie down on the bed. For a full three minutes, really observe your breathing. Focus your full attention on the air entering your nose, your ribcage expanding and contracting, the air flowing in and out of your body. Just be a spectator. Don't make any judgements. Don't change the rhythm of your breathing. Just observe.

If your mind begins to wander during this exercise, gently try to bring your thoughts back to your breathing. Once you get better at this, you can use it at any time – even while you're sitting at your desk at work – especially when you start to feel a little stressed or anxious.

TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Another lovely mindfulness exercise can be done whenever you're outdoors. If you're in the park, watch a bird, listen to leaves fluttering or observe a cloud moving across the sky. Watch it carefully for two or three minutes, without doing anything. Relax and try to bring your mind into harmony with whatever it is you're looking at.

If it starts to wander – you begin thinking about a work project, an argument you had with your mother, or what you're having for dinner – bring your attention back to the bird or cloud and start over. P



HEALTHY LONGEVITY & WELLBEING

LUIGI FONTANA

Edited extract from *Manual of Healthy Longevity & Wellbeing* by Dr Luigi Fontana (Hardie Grant, $36.99).

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

More than half (52 per cent) of Aussie women say they've avoided sex due to a lack of body confidence.

SOURCE: BODY CONFIDENCE REPORT

Feeling the *pleasure*

How you feel about your body can have a powerful effect on your ability to feel sexual pleasure, says sex therapist Rachel Zar.

It's no secret that our body changes throughout our lifetime, from a softening belly to weight gain to wrinkles. As normal as these changes are, even the most body positive among us may struggle with not feeling at home in our body – and we may start to see the impact in our sexual relationships.

According to some reports, up to 90 per cent of women and between 20 and 40 per cent of men report dissatisfaction with their body. And for women, research has shown that negative body image is one of the biggest factors to interfere with sexual pleasure, physical closeness and responsiveness (second only to relationship distress). Let's be clear here: There's nothing about the changes in your body that makes you less sexy or sexual. It's what you *think* about your body that can cause a problem.

THE IMPACT OF NEGATIVITY

The more self-conscious you are about your body, the more likely you are to 'spectator' your sexual experiences – essentially judging yourself during sex as if you were an outside observer. Really good sex requires being grounded in your body. And for you to have an orgasm, the part of your brain that's responsible for thinking and judging (the cerebral cortex) needs to quiet down – which is less likely if you're stuck in negative thoughts.

If you're not present in your body, it may not respond to sexual stimuli with physical signs of arousal; this is where difficulty with sexual functioning (issues with lubrication, erections and orgasm) may arise. And when sex causes anxiety, you may not crave it as much. Thus your libido is likely to go down over time, which can cause disconnection in your relationship.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE

Rewriting the mental script about your body is easier than you think. Here are some good places to start:

PRACTISE MINDFULNESS There are stacks of mindfulness apps out there that can help you experience your body from the inside out instead of from the outside in. With practice, this will help you go from "What does my body look like?" to "What does my body *feel* like?" Focusing on sensations helps get you out of your head.

REFRAME THOSE THOUGHTS State to yourself what's true without judgement: "My hips are wider than they were before childbirth/when I was younger" is true. "My hips are way too wide now" is just mean.

CUT OUT NEGATIVE BODY TALK TO YOUR PARTNER Complaining about your perceived flaws brings both of you into a judgmental space.

GET REACQUAINTED WITH YOUR BODY Try giving yourself a massage with your favourite lotion or exploring with masturbation. The more you know your body and treat it with kindness, the less scary and foreign it'll feel.

BELIEVE YOUR PARTNER When you get a compliment, pause and hold on to it instead of rebuffing it. And when you question whether your partner finds you sexy, try to detect the signs that they're turned on by you. Notice their body tensing, them pulling you closer, the look in their eyes. This is all evidence of what's true: Your body is sexy and so deserving of pleasure.

> *I'm definitely more unapologetic about who I am now.*

Jessica Rowe

The media personality and author shares how her very public humiliations and private challenges have changed her outlook on life for the better.

BY DONNAY TORR PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL SUESSE

Followers of self-confessed "crap housewife" Jessica Rowe's Instagram page will be well acquainted with her irresistible sense of humour... and the long-suffering expressions of husband Peter Overton and daughters Allegra, 16, and Giselle, 13, as they get roped into the creation of elaborate Taco hats and lame jokes about strawberries. ("I'm serious, don't post that... I'm just trying to help you!" drawls a teen voice in the background of a particularly cringey video. But, Jess posted it.) It was probably inevitable that the author, media personality and host of podcast *The Jess Rowe Big Talk Show* would publish *Mum Jokes*, a collection of over 500 eye-rollers, out now.

"Laughter is the stuff of life," says Jess, who gleefully took to a borrowed Vespa for our shoot. "I'm drawn to people who make me laugh. What I love about getting older is I'm better at laughing at myself, as opposed to when I was in my 20s. Back then, you're more worried about what everybody thinks of you, but the reality is that no one actually thinks about you – everyone's too busy worrying about themselves! There's this idea women can't be funny, but, actually, I think we're the ultimate jokesters. Humour's a way of saying to the universe, 'Screw it, I'm myself, I'm funny, I'm a woman. And this is my subversion of your preconceived ideas.' It's powerful: fully owning who you are."

In fact, Jess has had more reasons than most to lean into the power of humour as a shield when life just won't stop hurling lemons. In 2005, she recollected growing up with a parent diagnosed with bipolar disorder in *The Best of Times, The Worst of Times*, co-written with her mother, Penelope, and describes her own mental health battles during her tumultuous media career in her 2015 memoir, *Is This My Beautiful Life?* Her 'otherness' made Jess an easy target, and she ►

was regularly vilified for a host of so-called failings: too-short hair, a weird laugh, too much personality, too little professionalism or chemistry with a co-host... At one of her lowest points, Jess, who went through three emotionally gruelling attempts at IVF before finally falling pregnant, feared for the health of her unborn baby because of the stress caused by the controversy over her future with the Nine Network's *Today* show. She left her ill-fated job shortly after returning from maternity leave, under the murky mantle of 'pay disputes'. Frankly, it was often a case of laugh, or you'll cry.

"I'm definitely more unapologetic about who I am and where I am in my life these days," says Jess. "I had this gradual realisation that there was no point blaming people for things that didn't work. This was my life, and I could choose the work I wanted to do, who I wanted to work with, what friendships I didn't want to pursue anymore. Of course, there are still times when I struggle, or think that I didn't handle something very well. But I believe that you just have to keep going. These days, I make my choices based on what is going to bring me joy and on what is right for me and my family."

Jess remembers her time co-hosting Network Ten's morning show, *Studio 10*, as an opportunity to finally be herself. "I realised that I didn't have to fit in a box, or label it. I could draw on different skills at different times, whether debating serious issues or having a laugh." She describes her decision to leave the chat show in 2018 to pursue other things as "a risk". "I was scared, thinking 'What if I don't get any work?' But I was persistent, too. We have to back ourselves. Even if you haven't done something before, if you're given an opportunity, put your hand up. What's the worst that could happen? Maybe it doesn't work out, but at least you gave it a crack."

Jess's podcast, *The Jess Rowe Big Talk Show*, launched in August 2021. Her very first interview was with her former *Today* co-host Karl Stefanovic – he of the 'lack of chemistry' notoriety – and their chat lead to an apology from Karl for not supporting her better when they were working together, and the purging of some painful memories. Since then, she's interviewed the likes of Poh Ling Yeow, Turia Pitt and Kyle Sandilands, tackling the topics of reinvention and wellbeing. "It's an enormous privilege that people trust me enough to open up to me," says Jess. "The fundamental thing I've learnt is that we're all just people and that we're all doing our best. And everyone has something to say!"

MASTERING MENOPAUSE

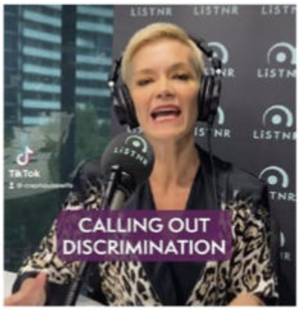
Jess turns 53 in June and doesn't "give a toss" about getting older. She's realised that "a career and life is never about climbing a ladder and breaking ceilings." Rather, they're about missteps and zigzagging as you take the brave, scary road to self-discovery. "I'd say the biggest thing that's changed in the past decade for me is that I'm far more open to what else I can do, rather than thinking, 'Oh, no, I've got to stay in the lane my background dictates,'" she says.

Jess describes menopausal hormonal therapy (MHT) as a "game changer" in navigating menopause – but it took a nudge from her mum to get her to deal with the symptoms. "I remember a time when I was waking up at night so hot! ►

Front Rowe seat

COLOURFUL PERSONALITY

Jessica proudly laying out her quirky side – and that brightly patterned number: "It's powerful fully owning who you are."

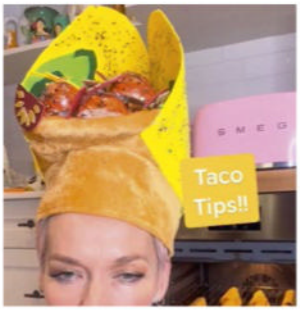


LISTNR UP, PEOPLE

Tackling discrimination during a special International Women's Day podcast on the popular *The Jess Rowe Big Talk Show* on Listnr.

IT'S A FAMILY THING

Cherishing family time with her husband, *Nine News* presenter Peter Overton, and daughters (from left) Giselle and Allegra.



HAT TRICK

Providing much-needed taco tips to her huge following on TikTok (@craphousewife) – with a zany homemade taco hat, no less!

> *I used to be very single-minded about what a good life seemingly looked like, which I now know is all crap.*

JESSICA WEARS (OPENING SPREAD) BLANCA SHIRT. ZARA JEANS AND SHOES. OWN EARRINGS.
THIS PAGE: BLANCA SHIRT AND PANTS. ŞENER BESIM BANGLE. RELIQUIA EARRINGS

Fast five for Jessica

Dream award-show dress designer?
Aussie duo Romance Was Born: there's going to be sequins, feathers, colour!

A song you loved as a teenager?
Oooh, *Tainted Love* by Soft Cell! And when feeling grungy, The Cure. I adore *The Love Cats* – you know, since I'm a crazy cat lady!

The biggest surprise of ageing?
That I love getting older, because I care less what people think. That's so empowering.

Your go-to workout routine?
Pilates alongside one of my best friends, followed by a catch-up coffee, chat and laugh.

Something that joining TikTok has taught you?
That I'm probably the world's most embarrassing mum, and there's nothing wrong with that! I think that parents are almost duty bound to embarrass their kids.

Pete would say, 'Oh, my God, you're lying on top of the quilt, what's going on?!" Jess also struggled with perimenopausal brain fog and irritability. "I ignored it for a while, which was really dumb. Then I talked to my mum and she said, 'Go see your doctor, because you don't need to just keep putting up with it!' I thought I was good at looking after myself, but I needed my mum to remind me to see a GP. It's about not ignoring what's happening or thinking, 'Oh, well, it's just getting older' – yes, it's what happens to our bodies, but we don't need to be suffering."

MIND MATTERS

Jess is a passionate advocate for mental health awareness: she's been named a Member of the Order of Australia for her work, and is an ambassador for BeyondBlue. She documented her battle with severe postnatal depression after the birth of her first child in her memoir, and had therapy for clinical depression, anxiety disorder and panic attacks. Asking for help, she says, is one of the bravest and best things you can ever do.

"I didn't look after my mental health enough when I was younger, and that came to a head when I had postnatal depression," she shares. "Up until then, I felt – incorrectly – that being strong was about not asking for help, and just pushing through... until that became impossible. When you have a mental illness, you can't keep on keeping on. It's not just about having 'character' and all this other nonsense that you might tell yourself. I used to be very single-minded about success and what having a good life seemingly looked like, which I now know is all crap. But, when you put all that expectation and pressure on yourself, it can be hard to take a step back and go, 'Actually, I'm not in a good place. I can't do this on my own. I need to ask someone to help me."

It was a terrible time in her life, but also an "extraordinary" period, because it was the start of Jess being gentler on herself. "I'm still a work in progress. There are moments when I'll catch myself and think, 'No, stop having this negative soundtrack in your head that you'd never use when talking to someone you love!'"

Jess is open about still taking antidepressants. "I talk about all this because it's so important that we destigmatise it. It's realising that 'I'm capable, I can do all this in my life. But what helps me do it is my medication, and I'm not going to pretend otherwise.' Pretending not only does you a disservice, but other people, too, who are wondering: 'Why does everyone else seem to know what they're doing and have it together?!' No, none of us do. We all need help sometimes."

> *Being brave is about still being afraid, but doing it anyway.*

HAND-ME-DOWN VALUES

Jess has passed her tendency to speak her mind on to her daughters, who'll jump into family debates about everything from musician Kanye West's damaging anti-semitism ("There's a total Kanye ban at home; we just won't listen to him!"), to calling out their mum about her opinions. "Giselle is my eco-warrior, and Allegra has stood up to people who are unkind since she was a little girl. They just blow me away: they stand for something, and I'm very proud of that. They'll make me think about things, too, point stuff out that I might not realise wasn't okay to do or say. If anyone's mean to them, I'll be seething and they'll say, 'Mum, you need to stop giving those people death stares, because we've moved on.' My daughters, telling me to be more mature!"

Which, of course, Jess often just ignores – it's way more fun to craft a "fabulously sparkly" 'Müber' (Mum Uber) hat to wear while driving your kids and their friends around than it is to play it staid. ("It cracks me up! If we're going to spend hours in traffic, I may as well find something fun for myself to do!") But, seriously, Jess makes time for her family, no matter what shape that takes. "It's not about grand gestures," she says. "I've found that simply being around and in the moment, putting my phone down and talking to my family and realising 'Yes, they actually need me now' is so important."

FINDING UNEXPECTED JOY

Jess is proudly 'too much', thumbing her nose at the cloak of invisibility that so often seems to settle over women in midlife. "It's about finding where the unexpected joy can lie in my daily choices and not leading a 'safe' life," she says. "By this I mean realising that you don't have to be quiet and predictable if you don't want to. I love being more unpredictable as I get older. It cracks me up, and my closest mates, too! It's hard-earned and not always easy, though, embracing yourself and the many ways in which you might be different. It takes work and being conscious about your choices. But, like I say to my daughters, you've got to be brave, and being brave is about still being afraid, but doing it anyway."

KATE FORD BLOUSE. BIANCA SPENDER PANTS. ARMS OF EVE EARRINGS. STYLING: NADENE DUNCAN. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: NORMIE GONZALES

Learning to LOVE FOOD AGAIN

Feeling guilt and remorse around eating is a common concern. Here, writer Stephanie Dolgoff shares how unlearning diet rules helped her find peace with food and how you can too.

THERE ARE A ZILLION REASONS why humans eat beyond capacity: We're bored, tired, distracted or starved for kindness, to name just a few. Or maybe we think leaving food is wasteful, or we were once food-insecure and eat too much instinctively. Plus, if you've ever dieted to lose weight, you know that restricting particular foods makes it really hard not to overeat on the rebound.

As for me, I had a serious eating disorder in my teens and early 20s. With therapy and practice, I figured out healthier ways of managing my emotions than bingeing, purging and obsessively dieting. My weight has been stable and midrange for decades. Still, until I began eating intuitively a few years ago, food was always a thing I had to be careful with, the way some folks must be vigilant around alcohol. I didn't diet explicitly to ►

Stephanie is the author of bestselling self-help book *My Formerly Hot Life.*

ILLUSTRATION: BEN GOLDSTEIN

WORDS: THE EDITORS OF PREVENTION

lose weight, but, in the back of my mind, I still judged what I ate as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, which I told myself was about health. On some level, though, it was also secretly about not gaining weight. And stress still made me eat compulsively.

OH, SHAME, *please go away!*

After eating what I believed was too much, I’d feel a shower of self-loathing at losing control and a stab of panic about potentially gaining weight – followed by a familiar resolve to do better. While I wasn’t as extreme as when I was younger, I’d often step up my exercise and avoidance of foods I thought might trigger a binge, which led to feeling deprived. I was sick of it! I was in my early 50s, a mum with two kids whom I’d taught to value and love their bodies, and I was stuck in this mindset. I picked up a copy of *Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach* by dietitians Elyse Resch and Evelyn Tribole.

The benefits of intuitive eating are supported by plenty of research, and proponents say that anyone who is unhappy with their relationship with food can move toward improving it by learning to listen to their body and tune out ‘diet culture’, which falsely equates thinness with virtue, success and health; demonises some foods and slaps a halo on others; and oppresses people who don’t fit the skinny (white) ideal. “We can trust our bodies and ourselves with food despite what diet culture claims,” says dietitian Christy Harrison, author of *Anti-Diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Well-Being and Happiness Through Intuitive Eating*.

Listening to our bodies’ signals is critical, adds dietitian Alissa Rumsey, a certified intuitive eating counsellor. “Hunger is a biological cue, similar to the urge to go to the bathroom,” she says. “We never say, ‘I just peed an hour ago, so I’m not going to go again,’ but we do that with the need to eat. Hunger is designed to help our bodies get enough nutrients to stay alive.” Yet we routinely overrule our bodies.

As of this writing, I’ve been eating intuitively for several years, and it’s almost second nature

> We never say, 'I just peed an hour ago, so I'm not going to go again,' but we do that with the need to eat.

to me. The pay-off – true peace with food and all that comes with it – is worth it. But, it wasn't always easy, especially at first. It required constant awareness of the food messages I gave myself, as regimented and sometimes punitive diet-type behaviours were so ingrained in me.

RETHINKING *the rules*

The first week, following the advice of dietitians Elyse and Evelyn, I bought a bunch of things I ordinarily wouldn't have kept in the house out of fear that I'd hoover them up. I got Nutella, trail mix and a favourite cereal that I'd last stress-scarfed straight from the box. I told myself that these foods would be there if I wanted them and that I could always go out and get more if I wanted to. I was truly allowed to eat them.

I kid you not: The Nutella sat unopened for weeks, because knowing that I could have it whenever I wanted made me forget about it. When it was time to eat and I saw it raising its smooth, chocolatey hand in the cabinet, I asked myself whether I felt like Nutella. The answer was simply never yes.

One afternoon, I snacked on some of the cereal, which – when I ate it slowly and consciously – I noticed was too sweet. I also realised that it had a harsh texture and was awfully dry. How had I eaten half a box without recognising how raw it left the roof of my mouth? I haven't bought that cereal since. As for the trail mix, I had some every day until I lost interest in it. This is habituation, or our natural tendency to find stuff we were once excited about kind of meh if it's just a normal thing.

At the office, instead of making sure my plate was three-quarters vegies and one-quarter lean protein, as was my ritual at the salad bar, I asked myself what sounded good for lunch. The answer varied: sushi; hummus and pita; and one day, spinach salad with eggs and bacon bits plus blue cheese dressing. When I checked in on my hunger mid-meal rather than eating on my usual autopilot, I often didn't see the need to have more than a few additional bites. I resisted the habit ►

Did you know?

Weight loss studies show that more than half of the weight lost will likely be regained within two years.

SOURCE: SCIENCEDIRECT.COM

What exactly is intuitive eating?

It's a philosophy made up of 10 principles that reject weight-loss diets and encourage you to tune in to how truly hungry or satisfied you are in a given moment. You use what you discover to inform how, what and when you eat. In short, these principles are:

1 STOP DIETING

Based on your experience, and all of the scientific evidence, dieting very rarely leads to lasting weight loss (see fact, top left).

2 RECOGNISE YOUR BODY'S HUNGER CUES

Then eat when your body tells you that you're hungry and stop munching when your body feels full. You can save half the lasagna or salad, for example, for lunch the next day.

3 MAKE PEACE WITH FOOD

Reject the idea of 'good' or 'bad' foods. Now, no food is off limits. Whether you eat it now or not is about listening to what your body wants right this moment. And if it says it aches for that doughnut, then enjoy it – don't scoff it, but savour it, being mindful of each bite's taste.

4 DEFY THE 'FOOD POLICE'

They're in your head all the time and often lead to needless feelings of guilt and remorse. They need to stand down!

of judging food as 'good' or 'bad' and myself as 'good' or 'bad' for having eaten it, and I noticed that, overall, my body was telling me to make mostly nutritious choices.

There were some tough moments: One night I finished a bowl of formerly taboo pasta at a restaurant, blowing right through the 'respect your fullness' stoplight. I scolded myself, and my mind sprinted to a plan to exercise more the next day, cut back on 'unhealthy' foods, be more careful... When I spoke with dietitian Christy about it, she asked me if it had felt like a fight-or-flight response. Yes, it had. She said that eating disorders were traumatic and that dieting could be as well. Next time, she advised me to take some deep breaths to calm down. She also pointed out that occasionally overeating is perfectly normal and intuitive eating won't be "perfect". It shouldn't feel like another diet, another way to judge oneself around food.

ADJUSTING *to trusting yourself*

As the months passed, believing that I could truly eat anything really toned down the allure of escaping through food. Christy uses a pendulum analogy: When you don't pull the pendulum so far back as to be in the deprivation zone, it doesn't swing as hard in the other direction. When I ate more than I intended or had something 'unhealthy' and felt that 'tsk-tsk', I kicked into nonjudgmental mode. I jotted down: *I had more food at dinner than I meant to. That is not a crime.* With a lot of repetition – and sadness at how hard I'd been on myself for so many years – I let it go.

One question new intuitive eaters ask is "Will I gain weight?" I have – a small-but-noticeable-to-me amount. "Some people gain weight with intuitive eating, some people lose weight and some stay the same," says Christy. "I would say most people gain, because they've been restricting. It stabilises over time, but at first, most people do." I add, in my head: *And there's nothing wrong with that. Because there isn't.*

I'd be lying if I said I was thrilled about it, but my slightly heavier body, my new normal, is a tiny

5 LEARN TO NOTICE YOUR FULLNESS SIGNALS

Before you eat a meal, start by asking yourself, 'How hungry are you?' This can guide you to the right-sized portions that you need. Pause during the meal to notice how full you're getting. Stop when you feel 'comfortably full', even if that means leaving yummy food on the plate or saying no to dessert. Remember, food will always be here for you, even 'treat' items when your body really wants them.

6 REALLY SAVOUR THE EXPERIENCE OF EATING

Don't eat on the run, or in front of the TV, or while on your computer. Studies show that people who eat while doing something else are likely to consume more, either at the time or at their next meal. Give food your full attention so you can appreciate and enjoy it.

7 COPE WITH YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS WITH KINDNESS

It's common to use food as a way to deal with feeling sad, bored, stressed or lonely. It might give you a temporary lift, but it doesn't solve the problem. Think about creating non-food strategies for handling a negative emotion. It might be going for a walk, calling a friend, or watching a favourite feel-good show. Or try seeking professional support to manage any consistent gloominess that's happening.

8 RESPECT YOUR BODY

Let go of any unrealistic expectations about body image. Your size and shape will change throughout your life, and it's important to know that your body shape doesn't define your success, popularity or happiness.

9 GET MOVING AND REALLY FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

Instead of exercising to burn kilojoules, focus on how it makes you feel. Choose something you enjoy, whether it's dancing, walking, running, gardening or a team sport. It's more likely to remain a regular and beneficial part of your routine if you like it.

10 HONOUR YOUR HEALTH

While you should always aim to eat healthy meals and snacks, it's also entirely normal to sometimes enjoy foods like chocolate or cakes (or whatever else is on your guilty list) when you really want to. Remember that one slip doesn't mean a fall. One meal or one day where you don't eat particularly healthily won't make a difference in the long run – it's what happens on most days that matters.

NOTE **Research has found that learning to eat intuitively can take many attempts. It's important to know that before you go into it. And some of the above steps may take you longer to internalise than others, but give it time.**

price to pay for no binges and total calm around food. I bought cute new pants rather than forcing myself into my old ones as if I deserved to be uncomfortable because I wasn't thinner. "Our bodies are not meant to stay the same year over year – they're meant to change," says dietitian Alissa. "Your weight at 45 is not going to be the same as at 25, and that's okay!"

Until I started eating intuitively, that little bit of sanity had literally never occurred to me. This is me living Intuitive Eating Principle 7: coping with emotions with kindness. It's working.

If you need help with an eating disorder or body image issues, call Butterfly Foundation on 1800 334 673 or visit butterfly.org.au

PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKE GARTEN, ISTOCK

Home stretch

Feeling a bit stiff and inflexible? Try this super-easy stretch routine to keep you loose and limber.

Have you ever had that feeling when you get up after sitting for a long time and your whole body feels stiff? By taking just a few minutes each day to stretch your muscles, you can solve that, plus gain all of these important benefits:

Improved flexibility

When you stretch, you lengthen your muscles and increase your range of motion. This can be especially important for joints that are prone to stiffness, such as hips, knees and shoulders. By keeping these joints flexible, you can reduce the risk of developing pain or injury.

Increased circulation

Stretching helps to boost blood flow to the muscles and joints. This can help to reduce inflammation and promote healing, which is important for maintaining joint health.

Better posture

Poor posture can put a lot of strain on the joints, leading to pain and stiffness over time. Stretching can help to improve your stance by lengthening the muscles that support your spine and hips. This can help to reduce strain on the joints and prevent discomfort and stiffness from developing.

Reduced risk of injury

When your joints are flexible and mobile, you're less likely to suffer from sprains, strains and tears. Regular stretching can help to keep your joints healthy and strong.

Note: For some of you, these exercises may seem hard at first – but regular practice will help you increase your flexibility. However, if you feel pain at any point, stop the routine.

FOR YOUR KNEES...

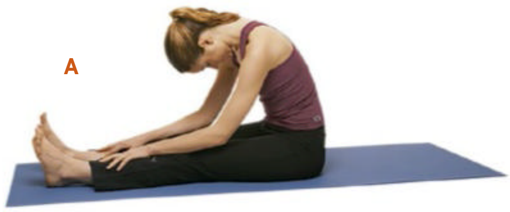
By rotating your knee joints outward and inward, as well as flexing and extending them, you'll improve their stretchability. Plus, once you relax, the leg muscles melt toward the floor so the body's weight can sink down into the bones, rooting out any tension that has settled into your legs.

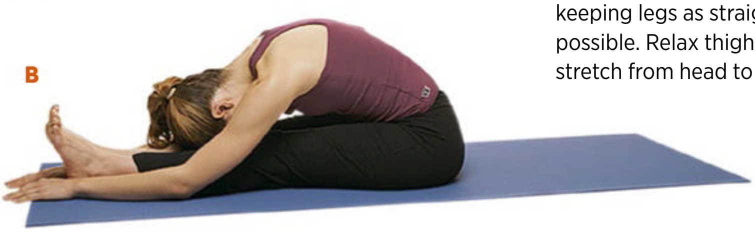
Fast fact

Knees are the most complicated joint in the body, relying on 10 muscles to function properly.

1 FORWARD BEND

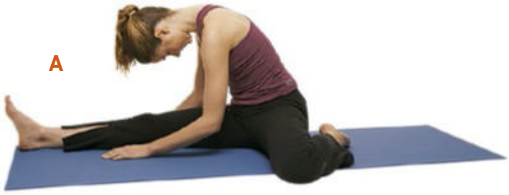
(A) Stretch both legs out, feet no more than hip-width apart. Drop chin to chest, stretching muscles and ligaments at base of skull. (B) Lean forward and reach for shins, ankles or feet, keeping legs as straight as possible. Relax thighs and feel stretch from head to ankles.

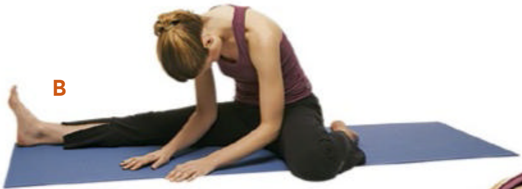


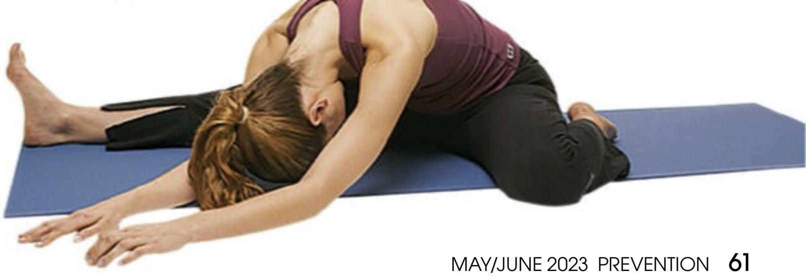


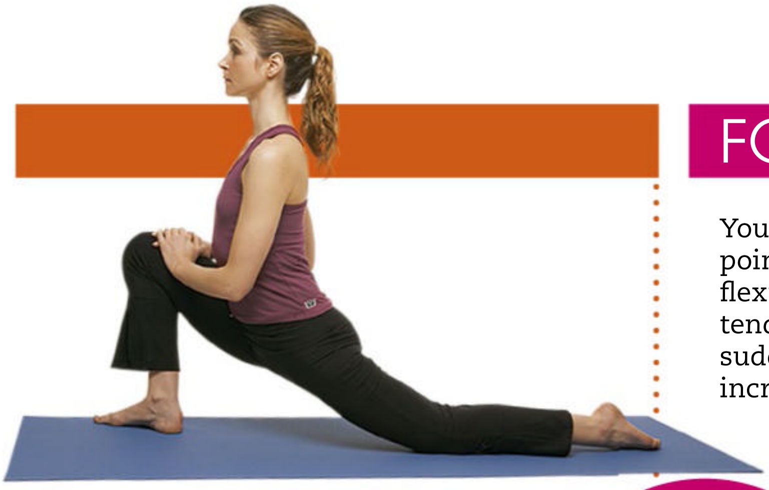
2 SINGLE-LEG BEND

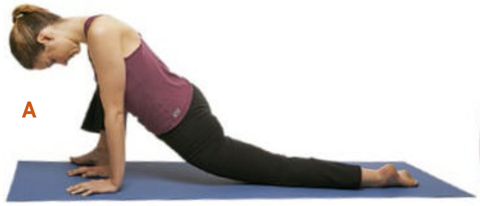
Extend right leg and fold left leg beside buttocks. Spread legs comfortably. You can either: (A) Lean forward reaching for shins, ankles or feet so shoulders are square over extended knee; or (B) bring body between legs and lean as far forward as possible. (The first one mainly stretches hamstrings, while the second option stretches the groin more.) Repeat on other side. ►







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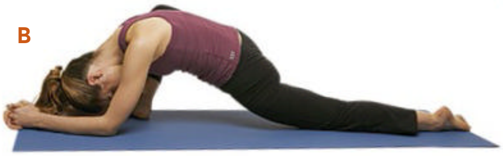
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3 LUNGE POSE

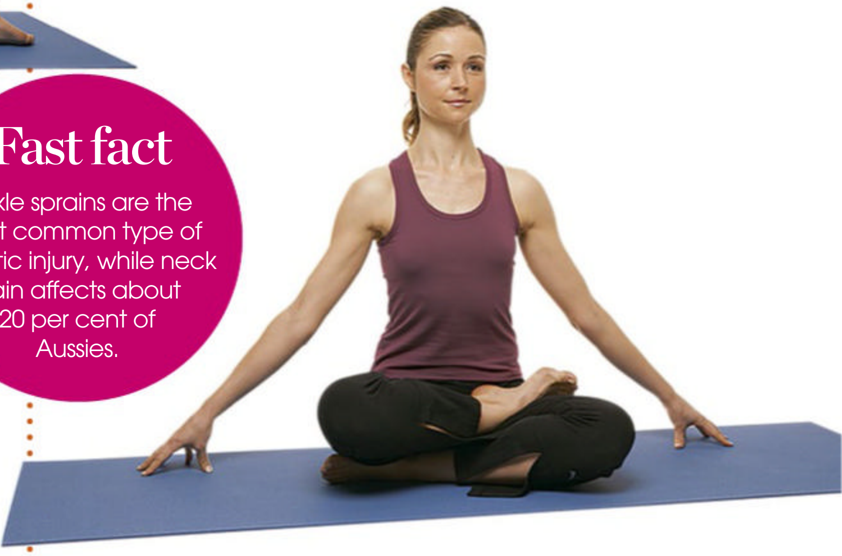
Place right foot on floor in front of you and rest left knee behind you. (A) With hands on ground for balance, bring weight into top of back thigh. (B) If you're comfortable, lower onto forearms and release upper-body weight to stress deeper hip tissue. Repeat on other side.

FOR YOUR ANKLES...

Your ankle moves in four directions: It can point, flex, turn out and turn in. Why is flexibility important? Because it enables the tendons, ligaments and muscles to handle sudden movements. This pose also gives you increased circulation and decreased swelling.

Fast fact

Ankle sprains are the most common type of athletic injury, while neck pain affects about 20 per cent of Aussies.

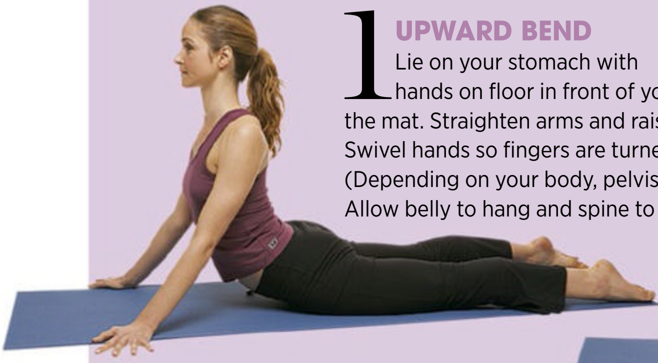


1 CRISS-CROSS

Starting in a cross-legged position, take right foot with both hands. Rotate right thigh outward, bringing outer side of ankle to rest on left thigh, preferably in hip crease. Repeat on other side.

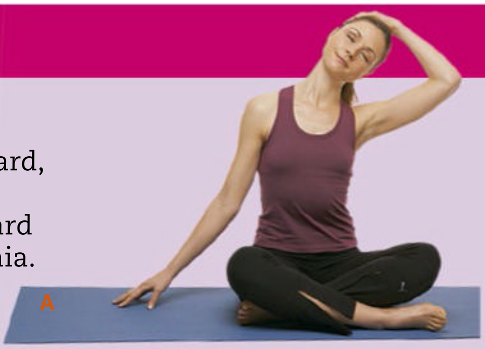
FOR YOUR NECK...

Use these poses to increase and maintain movement in your neck – forward, backward, side to side, right and left. Getting rid of pent-up compression in the neck helps ward off tension-caused headaches and insomnia.



1 UPWARD BEND

Lie on your stomach with hands on floor in front of you and as wide as the mat. Straighten arms and raise torso off floor. Swivel hands so fingers are turned out to the side. (Depending on your body, pelvis may be off floor.) Allow belly to hang and spine to arch slowly.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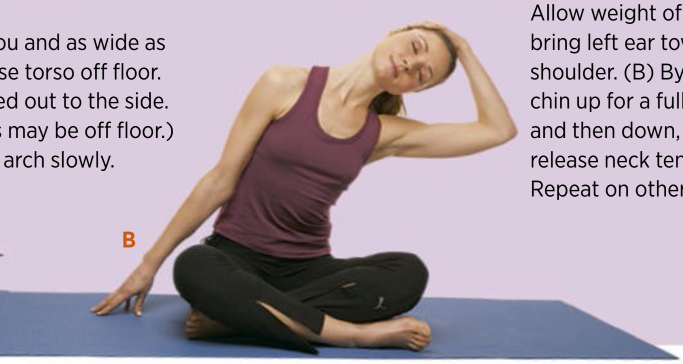
2 SIMPLE NECK STRETCH

(A) Place left hand over crown of head. Allow weight of hand to bring left ear toward left shoulder. (B) By tipping chin up for a full minute and then down, you'll release neck tension. Repeat on other side.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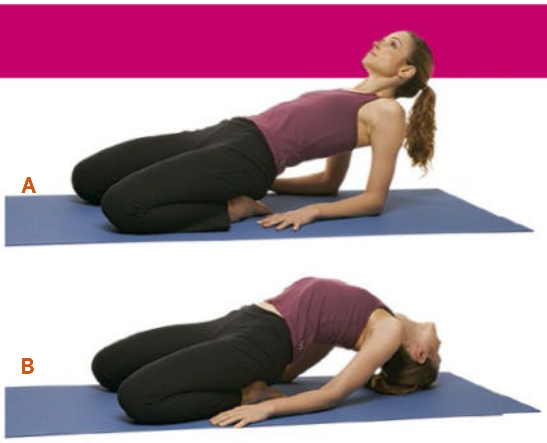
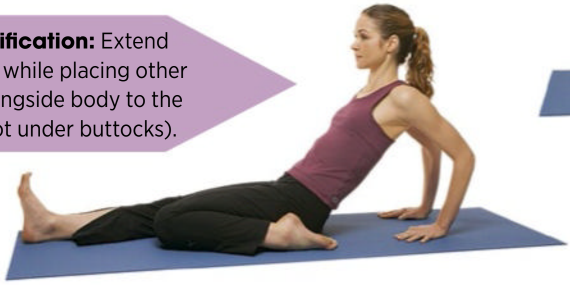
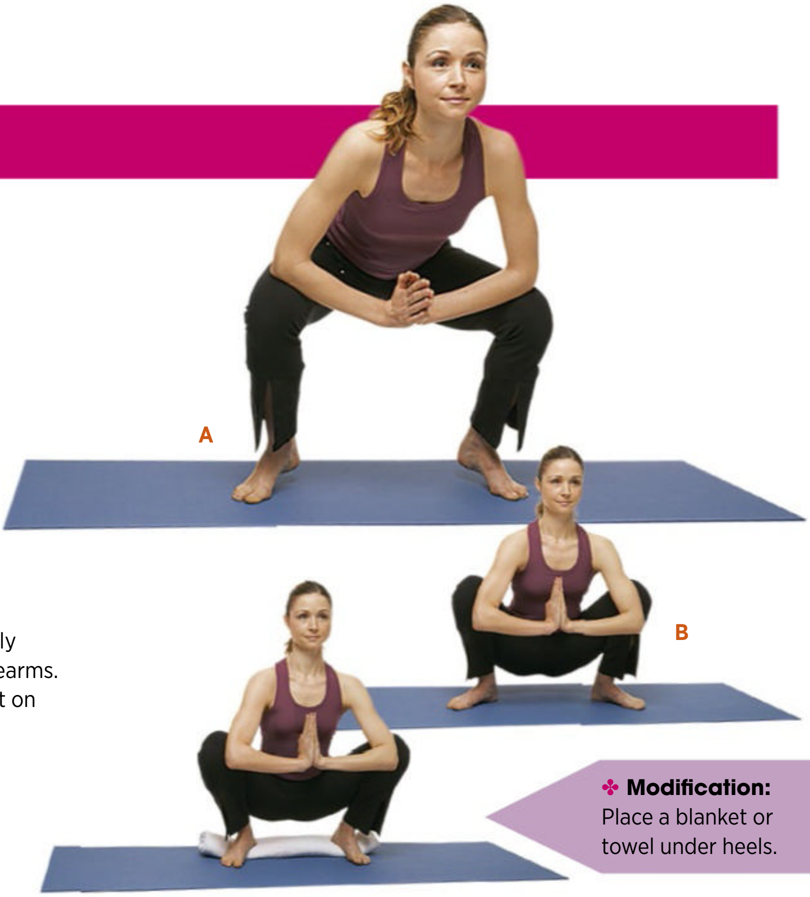


2 BENT-KNEE POSE

Sit on feet and spread knees apart. (A) Slowly lower body backward, resting weight on forearms. (B) If you're comfortable, arch back and rest weight on head. (To go further, rest entire spine on floor.)

✤ **Modification:** Extend one leg while placing other foot alongside body to the side (not under buttocks).

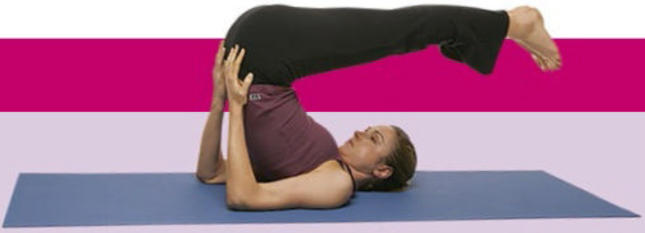


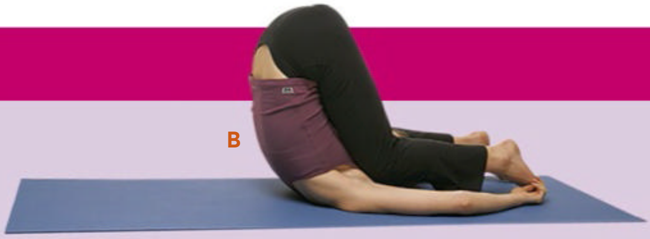


✤ **Modification:** Place a blanket or towel under heels.

3 SQUAT

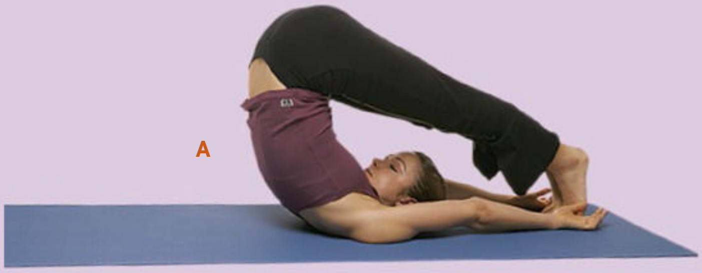
Start with feet slightly wider than hip-width apart. (A) Fold forward, knees bent, with hands between knees. (B) Lift chest and straighten back, sinking hips towards floor. Bring hands together at your sternum.



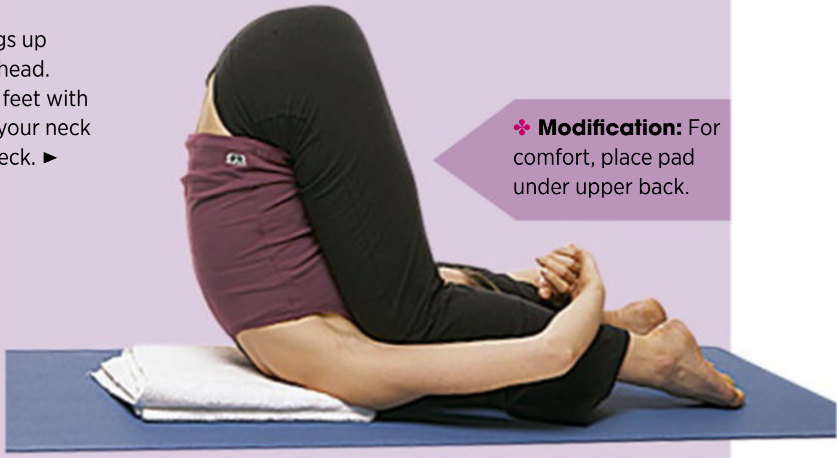


3 INVERTED POSE

Lying on your back with hands under buttocks, roll legs up and over head. (A) Aim to place toes on floor behind head. (B) If your toes can touch the ground, clasp calves, ankles or feet with hands. Keep weight between shoulders, but don't roll up on your neck just yet. Bend knees towards floor and then roll up on your neck. ►



✤ **Modification:** For comfort, place pad under upper back.

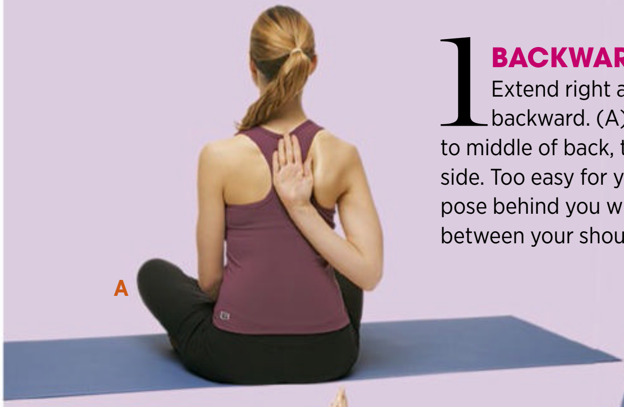


FOR YOUR SHOULDERS...

These moves work this joint in six ways, so you can painlessly reach around behind you, grab the stubborn ties to your dress and readjust them, all without a single cringe or twinge!

Fast fact

Your shoulders are the most movable joint in your body. However, this also means it's less stable.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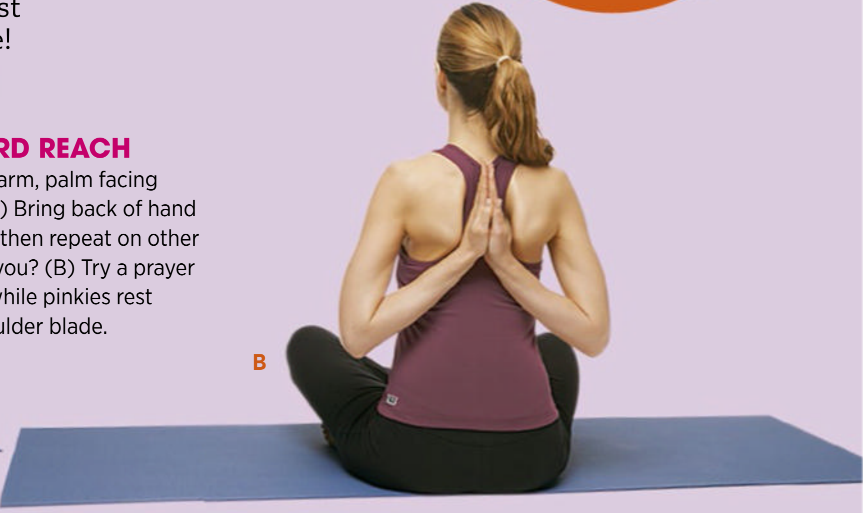
1 BACKWARD REACH

Extend right arm, palm facing backward. (A) Bring back of hand to middle of back, then repeat on other side. Too easy for you? (B) Try a prayer pose behind you while pinkies rest between your shoulder blade.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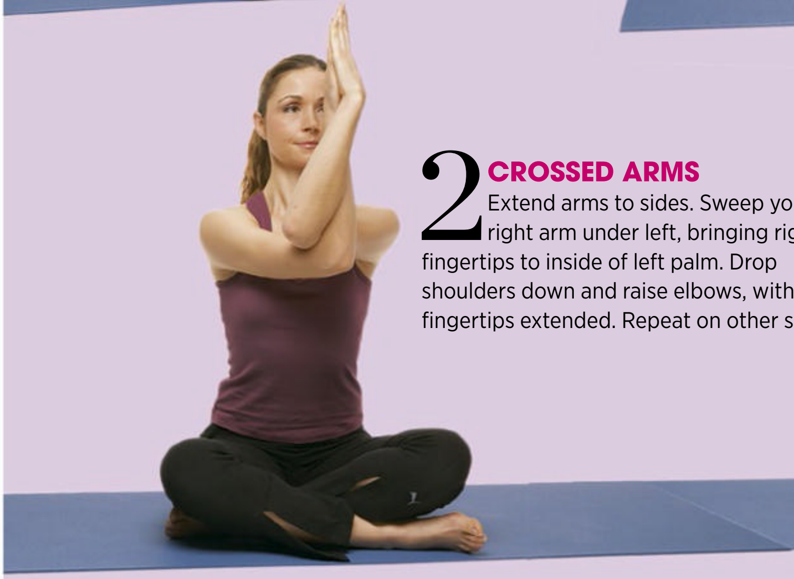
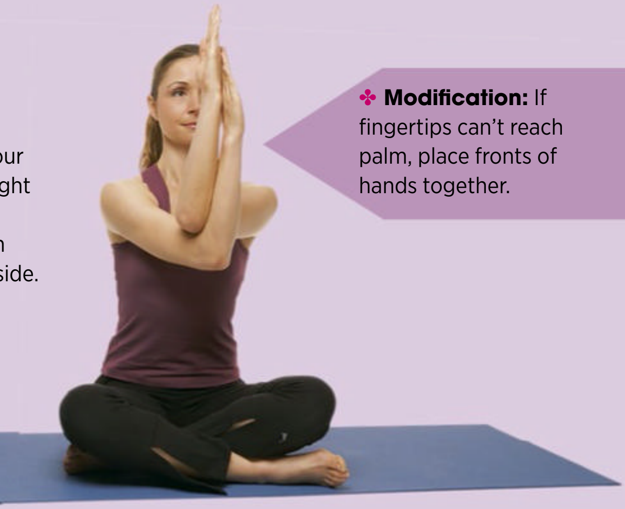


2 CROSSED ARMS

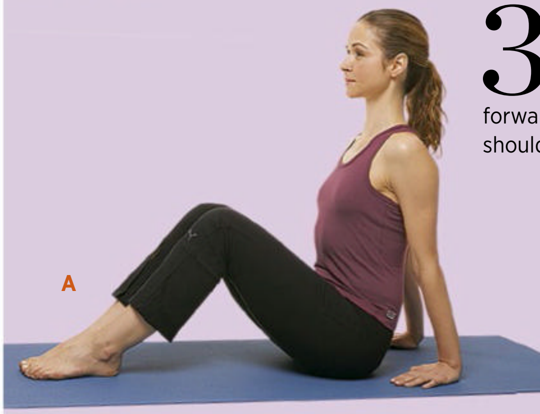
Extend arms to sides. Sweep your right arm under left, bringing right fingertips to inside of left palm. Drop shoulders down and raise elbows, with fingertips extended. Repeat on other side.



✤ **Modification:** If fingertips can't reach palm, place fronts of hands together.

3 HAMMOCK

(A) Sit down with hands at sides, palms facing down, and arch fingers forward. (B) Walk butt out to get a deep shoulder stretch and then rest butt on floor.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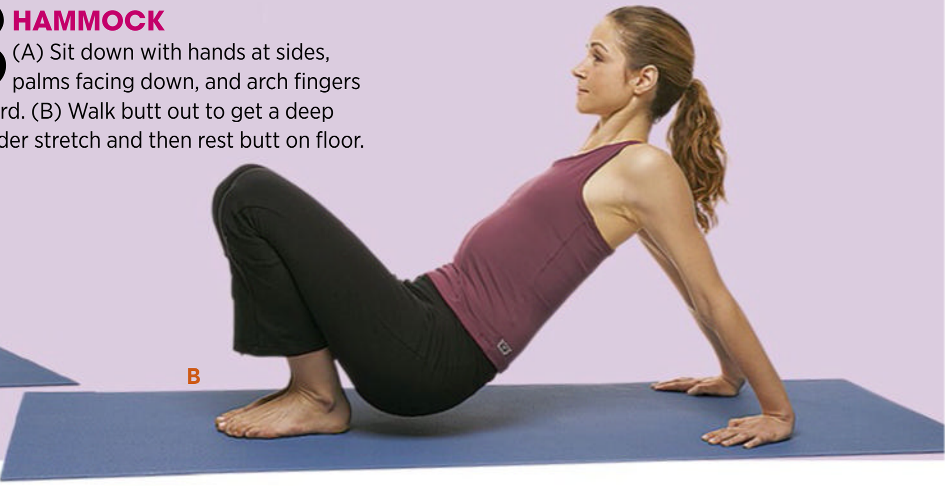
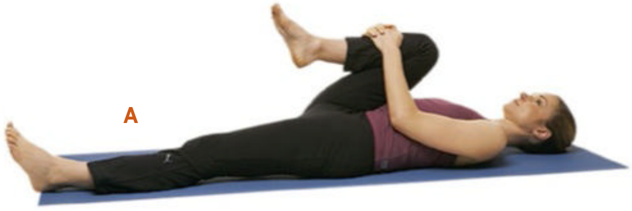

B

FOR YOUR HIPS...

These moves help with hip joint mobility, which means that, after a long commute or meeting, you won't walk out hoping the circulation returns in the foot that fell asleep. Not to mention that you're also lowering your chances of a future hip replacement.



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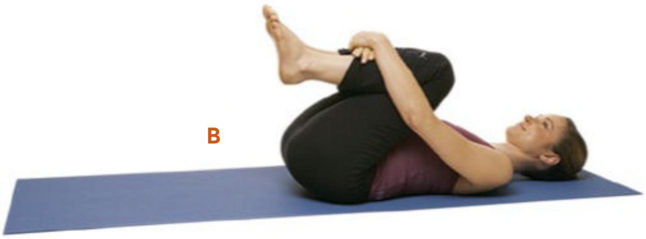
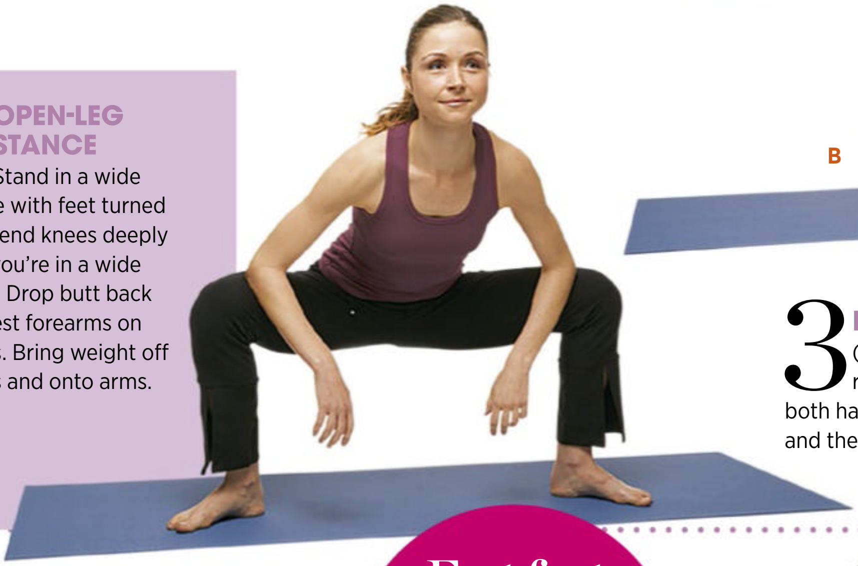


B

1 OPEN-LEG STANCE

Stand in a wide stance with feet turned out. Bend knees deeply until you're in a wide squat. Drop butt back and rest forearms on thighs. Bring weight off thighs and onto arms.



3 FOLDED POSE

(A) Lying flat on your back, draw your right knee into your chest, clasping both hands under knee. Repeat on other side and then (B) bring both knees to chest.

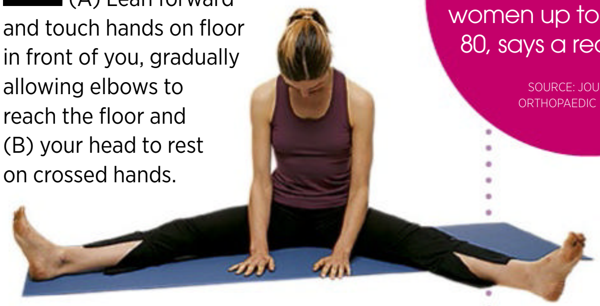
Fast fact

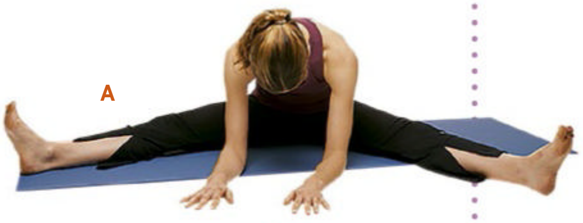
Hip bones continue to widen in both men and women up to about age 80, says a recent study.

SOURCE: JOURNAL OF ORTHOPAEDIC RESEARCH

2 OPEN-LEG BEND

Sit with legs at 90 degrees. (A) Lean forward and touch hands on floor in front of you, gradually allowing elbows to reach the floor and (B) your head to rest on crossed hands.





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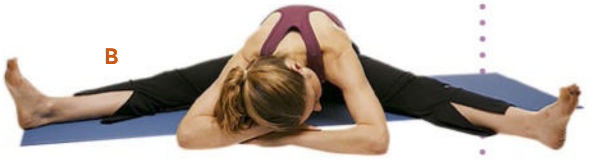

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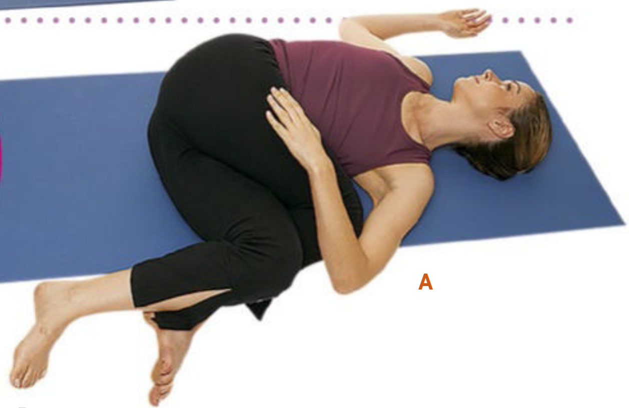
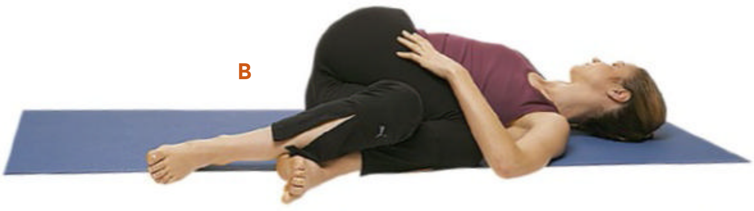


A

4 SPINAL TWIST

Lie on your back, squeezing both knees to chest with ankles together. (A) Cross right leg over left leg and drop both legs to the left, holding top of right thigh with left hand. Turn head to the right. (B) Draw knees up as close to your chest as hip bones allow. Repeat on other side.



B

Before starting any new exercise routine, consult your doctor.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RON CADIZ; CHRIS ECKERT/STUDIO D; GETTY IMAGES

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VITAMINS

Supplements claim to boost energy, save your memory and even help prevent serious disease, but there's no one-pill-fixes-all solution. Here's how to make a smart decision.

BY KAREN ROBOCK

47%

The percentage of Australians using dietary supplements, especially minerals and vitamins.

SOURCE: NPS MEDICINEWISE

1

SOME PEOPLE NEED SPECIFIC SUPPLEMENTS

People on restricted diets, as well as those facing food insecurity or with certain gastric disorders that inhibit nutrient absorption, might not be having all their nutritional needs met. Dietitian Monica Auslander Moreno recommends a B vitamin complex and iron, as well as an omega-3 supplement, to some of her vegan clients. People with anaemia or inflammatory bowel disease, including pregnant and lactating women, often need some degree of supplementation, too, she says, and people who've had a gastric bypass or live with Crohn's disease may also be deficient. People over 50 may require a boost of specific micronutrients in their diets, as we tend to absorb some nutrients, such as B vitamins, less well as we age. Monica recommends supplements "only to those for whom an intake of nutrients is a risk of being suboptimal," she explains.

2

CERTAIN VITAMINS CAN BE BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Some supplements have the potential to do more harm than good, especially at higher doses. One serious example is that people who have cancer should not take vitamin C during chemotherapy, as it may reduce the effectiveness of treatment. The Cancer Council cautions against beta-carotene (no more than 19mg), since it's been found to increase the chances of cardiovascular death and lung cancer, particularly in those who smoke. And US researchers raise a red flag about vitamin A. "In excess, vitamin A is associated with decreased bone density, hip fractures and liver problems," explains general internist Dr Jeffrey Linder. Pets and kids should be kept away from vitamins not intended for them. ►

WORDS: JENNIFER SAVIN, EMILY PRITCHARD, KATIE AVIS-RIORDAN AND SOPHIE BOYDEN. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

3 *You should talk to your doctor before you start taking a supplement*

They can help you determine which, if any, vitamins you might need and whether there are any potential interactions with medicines you're taking. Some supplements can change the metabolism, absorption or excretion of prescription or over-the-counter medication, and this can affect how well the meds work. If you're taking a blood thinner, for example, you should avoid supplementing with vitamin E, as it also has a blood-thinning effect. And someone taking a B12 supplement who's then given metformin (used to control blood glucose levels) for type 2 diabetes may require a bigger dose of B12 than before. That's why taking a DIY approach to supplementing isn't a great idea.

4 MULTIVITAMINS ARE NOT PROVEN TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CANCER OR HEART DISEASE

According to the latest research, there is insufficient evidence that your daily multi is protecting you from these two major diseases. When scientists examined the effects of vitamins A, B3, B6, B12, C, D and E, as well as multivitamins, calcium and several other nutrients, they found little or no benefit to popping a daily pill in preventing any form of cancer or heart disease (the leading cause of death in Australia). "I and my colleagues have been following the literature around supplements and there remains no convincing evidence that, for otherwise healthy adults who have a healthful diet, supplements offer much in the way of benefits," wrote Dr Linder in an editorial published last year in the medical journal *JAMA*. In fact, says Dr Linder, relying on multis may breed complacency: "Multivitamins and supplements are probably distracting people from things that'll help them live longer, like eating a healthful diet, getting exercise, being a healthy weight and avoiding smoking." That said, if you're not eating well, or are at risk of deficiencies because of a health condition, you should talk to your doctor and follow their advice on whether supplementing makes sense for you.

5 NOT ALL VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Vitamin supplements sold over the counter in Australia are regulated for safety and quality by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. This includes controlling the claims and promises the product makes in its advertising and on the pack. Products from international websites aren't regulated and there's a risk they may not have the beneficial amount of nutrients, may be contaminated with impurities or contain undisclosed or dangerous ingredients. So, be suspicious of claims that seem too good to be true. Also note that some supplements bought online may be quarantined by customs. When purchasing online, always choose a recognisable Australian retailer.

Halt!

Supplements aren't made to be a substitute for food, but to provide nutrients your body might be lacking.

6 *Nutritious meals beat a pill or a powder every time*

"People forget they're supposed to supplement food, not replace it," says Monica. Vitamin supplements are useful to enhance the benefits of a well-balanced diet loaded with nutritious vegetables, fruits, wholegrains and proteins – not to offset too many takeaway dinners. But, despite nutritionists preaching a 'food-first' mantra, about 8.3 million Aussies use vitamin supplements specifically to try to meet their needs, according to a Roy Morgan survey. And it's women aged 35-49 who are the biggest consumers (59 per cent). "People think it's easier to pop a pill than to actually address a nutrition knowledge gap or an intake shortfall," notes Monica. ►

Did you know?

Vitamin D is the most popular supplement in the world, followed by magnesium.

SOURCE: CONSUMER LAB

Multi-tasker

Multivitamins have also been found to boost energy, reduce stress and support muscle strength.

7

Multivitamins just might protect you from dementia and cognitive decline

Research on the effectiveness of brain-boosting, memory-aiding supplements has been mixed, and in 2019 the Global Council on Brain Health published a report questioning so-called memory supplements, a multibillion-dollar business that targets the ageing population. But the findings of a new study, published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, showed that supplements could play a role in improving cognition and possibly slow brain ageing. Researchers, who were looking at whether taking daily cocoa extract or a multivitamin for three years could benefit cognition, expected to see benefits from regular use of cocoa extract, but they instead found that multivitamins measurably improved memory and executive function in older adults. "It's too early to recommend daily multivitamin supplementation to prevent cognitive decline, [but] our findings opened up a new avenue for investigation to identify a potentially simple and highly accessible strategy to protect against cognitive decline," says Dr Laura D. Baker, one of the study's lead investigators and a researcher in gerontology and geriatric medicine. "We're planning a larger study, with even more participant diversity, to confirm our initial findings and better understand why multivitamins might offer protection against cognitive decline."

Did you know?

Female-focused multivitamins generally include higher amounts of iron, folate and calcium.

8

A DAILY DOSE OF VITAMIN D TABLETS DOESN'T GUARANTEE HEALTHY BONES

The first large randomised controlled study found that vitamin D supplements, taken with or without calcium, had no effect on bone fracture rates. (People who have osteoporosis or low bone mass may still require a supplement.) More than one in three Aussies has a mild to severe deficiency of vitamin D. Some still argue that vitamin D supplements help with immune function and reduce inflammation, but it's more complicated than that, according to findings from the recent Vitamin D and Omega-3 Trial (VITAL) study. "Low vitamin D levels are associated with almost everything from colon cancer to cardiovascular disease and other conditions," says Dr Linder. "However, there's no evidence that supplementing with vitamin D prevents any of these things from happening." This is another ask-your-GP situation.

9

IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO GET PREGNANT, TAKE A MULTI

This is advisable because multivitamins contain folic acid, a B vitamin important for metabolism and cell growth. Most people get enough – many foods (including breads, pastas and breakfast cereals) are enriched with folic acid, and folate is found naturally in a number of fruits, vegetables and legumes, including leafy green vegetables, oranges and beans. But folic acid is so effective at preventing some major birth defects when mums-to-be supplement with it before and during early pregnancy that the Australian Government recommends that all women of reproductive age take 400 micrograms of folic acid and that pregnant women get 600 micrograms.

18%

The percentage of Aussie women who appear fit and healthy yet are deficient in iron.

SOURCE: THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

10

There's a lot that we just don't know

"We should be investing a lot more in nutrition research," says nutrition scientist Dr Taylor C. Wallace. "We already know that what we feed our body has a great deal to do with our short-term wellness and long-term health, but, all things considered, there's not a lot of research being done to understand exactly which nutrients we need and in what quantities." In the meantime, Dr Wallace sees a daily multivitamin as a low-risk way to protect yourself against possible hidden micronutrient deficiencies. "A multivitamin is like a bit of added insurance," he says. **P**

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF PREVENTION US; ISTOCK

More than 13 per cent of women, aged 38 to 50, say they've had a midlife crisis. It's time to shake off any disappointment!

SOURCE: RESEARCHGATE

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

How to live your best midlife

Forget everything you've heard about getting older and step into your power! Women in their 40s and beyond can be fitter, fiercer and more fabulous than ever. Experts weigh in on how to get there.

BY SABRINA ROGERS-ANDERSON

When the *Sex and the City* reboot hit TV screens around the world in 2021, the internet went wild with a shocking revelation. The *And Just Like That...* characters were portrayed as being in their mid-50s... the exact same age the stars of *The Golden Girls* were meant to be when the popular comedy series began in 1985!

The portrayal of women in midlife may have evolved from ageing and irrelevant to powerful and alluring in the past few decades, but this period of profound transformation can still rock women to their core. Many of us spend our 20s and 30s striving to feel accepted and achieve success, but our values and goals can take an abrupt turn in midlife. We may suddenly care less about what people think of us and lose interest in gaining external validation and rewards, instead turning inwards and focusing on what truly matters to us. Over the following pages, a few inspiring women share their midlife journeys, plus experts reveal how you can master midlife. ►

“Make the effort to form deep connections”

Phoebe Adams, 45

After giving birth to miracle twins with donor eggs when she was 40, Phoebe packed up her family of five and took a road trip across Australia before settling into a new life in Perth. Meeting people in an unknown city wasn’t easy, so she decided to launch a business to help women over 50 make meaningful connections and have fun.

“My husband, Toby, and I tried to have a second child through IVF for eight years. When the second last round failed, I was devastated. I started researching egg donation and found a group on Facebook that filled me with so much hope. I wasn’t as devastated when our last round failed because we had another option. Four months later, we were on a plane to South Africa to get our eggs. We had a beautiful holiday with our daughter, Bea, who was 10 years old, before going to the clinic as a family. Bea was so excited and we were brainstorming names together while we were waiting for them to implant the embryos.

“The day we got home from Cape Town, I did a pregnancy test and it was positive! After 10 years of negative tests, I was so thrilled that one of the two embryos they’d put in had taken. But when we went to our first scan, what we saw on the screen blew our minds: there were two babies! It was such a special moment. Willow and Indigo were born a few months after I turned 40. It was really magical and Bea was such a good big sister from the outset. I loved being a mum again and I didn’t even mind the sleepless nights.

“But living in Sydney had its downsides. Toby was working in the city and it took him ages to get to and from work every day. When the twins were about six months old, we thought, ‘Something’s got to give.’ After Toby flew back to Perth for his grandfather’s funeral, we decided to move over there.

“We packed our lives into a caravan and drove across the country. Bea was now 11 and the twins were 18 months. It was an unforgettable trip! But when we arrived in Perth, I felt lost. I hardly knew anyone and I had to work hard to make connections. My business partner and I had a lightbulb moment one day. We’d been wanting to do something to bring people together and we came up with the idea of creating a community for women over 50. Unlike other times in our life, where friendship is built on shared experiences, like school, university, work or chats at the school gate, forming friendships can become more elusive the older we get.

“So, we started Connected Women (connectedwomen.net) in Perth and we organise events, such as wine tours and art classes. It’s been a huge hit and we’ve now expanded to Sydney and Melbourne, and we’ll hopefully be nationwide by the end of the year. It’s just so amazing seeing women in their 50s and 60s reconnect with other women.”

My best advice

“Don’t overthink things – if you want to try something new or an opportunity pops up, just go for it! Making the effort to form deep connections with people will be so worth it. If you don’t have a community around you, go and find one.”

Did you know?

Consistently active midlife adults have a 42 per cent lower risk of heart-related death.

SOURCE: JAMA NETWORK OPEN

IDENTIFY YOUR CORE VALUES

Melbourne-based psychologist Dr Robyn Vickers-Willis spent decades studying the shifts in our feelings about ourselves and our attitudes towards contentment as we enter midlife. "As we're growing up, we try to fit in as good citizens," she says. "Society expects this of us. We're focused on our peers, our partners, our children and our workplace. And then, at midlife, it's really important to start working out what our own true values are."

Clinical psychologist Dr Emmanuella Murray agrees. "During midlife, we tend to question our life because we're ageing. So, if you're not happy, it might be time to take a step back and think about what would make you happy."

Figuring out your values and how to live in line with them can not only boost your happiness, it can also improve your health. A US study found that having a higher sense of purpose in life is associated with a reduced risk of chronic disease and death. "Values are not about what we want to achieve," Dr Murray explains. "They're actually ongoing and they give us direction, whereas goals are what we want to achieve along the way. One of your values might be to be a loving and supportive partner. So, when you're being loving and supportive, you're living that value. But, once you stop being loving and supportive, you're not living that value."

To identify your core values, start by making a list of the times you were happiest, proudest and most fulfilled in both your personal and professional life. When you're done, visit thehappinessplanner.com/pages/list-of-core-values for a broad list of values, or search 'core values' online. Beside each period of your life that brought you joy, write down one or several values these experiences represented.

When you've identified five to 10 values, write a list of ways you could pursue them – and put them into action! ►

BEAT THE MIDLIFE LOW

So many women in their 40s are desperately trying to live up to the myth of 'having it all', but juggling all the competing pressures in their life can leave them feeling depleted and dissatisfied. US researchers reviewed studies of 1.3 million people in 51 nations and found that the concept of a 'midlife low' is all too real. According to Dr Murray, this can lead many women to make impulsive decisions and engage in damaging behaviours in a bid to ease their unhappiness.

"During midlife, women often question their identity, and perimenopause and menopause can have an impact on their brains and bodies," says Dr Murray. "They might feel out of control of their emotions or have unexplained depression or lethargy, so naturally they begin to feel dissatisfied with their lives and start wondering what changes they can make to feel better.

Fast fact

Muscle mass decreases about 3 to 8 per cent each decade after the age of 30. So, aim to keep nice and strong!

SOURCE: HARVARD HEALTH PUBLISHING

"Women often tell me, 'I'm going to ditch my job' or 'I've had an affair.' Online shopping is an addiction for some because it gives them a dopamine hit. Others might turn to drinking more to dull out the day. Some women start to strive for earth-shattering goals, like running the New York City Marathon or climbing Mount Everest, and it can be quite obsessive. I'm not saying they can't achieve these things, but it shouldn't be to prove their worth."

So, how can you overcome the midlife slump? After working out your core values, Dr Murray suggests setting achievable goals. "A lot of people always strive for more and never feel satisfied," she explains. "If we can align with our values and set realistic goals, then we're going to have a lot of purpose in life."

Contributing to other people's lives in meaningful ways can also improve your quality of life. "Research shows that it increases mood and self-worth," says Dr Murray. "It can be giving to a charity or supporting a friend or random acts of kindness, like opening a door for a stranger."

While scheduling regular catch-ups with friends can be challenging when you're already so time-poor, it's worth the effort. "Women tend to lose connections at midlife, but research suggests that the more we connect with others, the better we feel about ourselves," she says.

After discovering a passion for sailing in her 40s, and the tight-knit community that came with it, Dr Murray hopes others will step out, too. "I want women to push themselves to try different things because you're never too old to meet new people," she says. "You don't have to run a marathon; you could simply join a choir or a book club."

"You just need to take the first step and keep going"

Lauren Clemett, 55

For her 50th birthday, Lauren went skydiving with her husband and friends. When she saw the photos of her jump, she was shocked by the person staring back. Five years on, she's lost nearly 20 kilos, won her gym's six-week challenge and participated in a natural bodybuilding comp.

"I've always been fearless, so turning 50 was the perfect excuse to finally jump out of a plane. We got a group of eight people together and headed to the skydiving centre in Byron Bay, New South Wales. My husband, Graeme, didn't really want to jump – not only because it was scary, but also because they apply a 'fat tax'. They weigh you beforehand, and if you're over the limit, you have to pay more because they can't take as many people up. We both knew we'd be over, but when the scale said I was nearly 80 kilos, I wondered how I'd got there.

"When I saw the photos of my jump, that's when reality really hit. I realised I hadn't just turned 50, I'd turned fat and frumpy at the same time. At that moment, Graeme and I knew we both needed to do something about it.

"We joined our local F45 [gym] two months later and we've never looked back. We'd wake up every morning, head to the gym and smash out a session before starting our day. About a month later, the gym was having an eight-week challenge. I weighed in at 76 kilos at the beginning of it and, by the end, I was down to 62 kilos.

"My results weren't just because of the daily workouts. The challenge also involved learning how to eat healthily, and what I found out about food at 50 was unbelievable. I realised how much sugar is hidden in so many foods and I started reading labels.

"I've been training consistently for five years now and I even competed in an ICN bodybuilding competition last year. ICN stands for 'I compete natural' and it means you don't use steroids. My daughter, Kerenza, is into it and she convinced me to compete in the 'transformations' category. I worked really hard with my coach, and Graeme supported me every step of the way. It was an amazing experience.

"This year, I won my F45's six-week challenge for greatest female fat loss and Graeme won the same category for males! We had a theory that we'd never win a challenge because we were too old and it was harder to get results than younger people, but we proved ourselves wrong. One thing is for sure: I'll never go back to how I was before."

My best advice

"There are so many amazing examples of women doing their best after 50 and competing at the top level in many arenas. If you look in the mirror and don't like what you see, follow their lead and change it!" ►

Participating in an exercise class not only helps you stick with it, but also adds a competitive edge so you push yourself a little harder!

“It’s never too late to start something new”

Kirsty Ferguson, 58

Kirsty has accomplished more after 40 than some people do in a lifetime. She navigated two divorces, launched an international business, published a book, bred palomino foals and went on a six-day horse-riding trek in the Victorian Alps. And she doesn’t regret a thing.

“After years of infertility treatment and losing my parents and younger brother in quick succession, I was diagnosed with mild depression. My doctor told me I could go on medication or make some big changes in my life, so I chose the latter. My marriage didn’t survive that period of change and I was suddenly faced with starting over at 45. I decided I wanted to do something radically different, so I bought seven acres in the Currumbin Valley in Queensland and moved there from Sydney with my dog and my horse. I spent a few years up there breeding palomino foals and focusing on reclaiming who I was.

“When I’d ticked that box, I went back to Sydney to expand the interview coaching business for the aviation industry I’d launched a few years earlier. Pinstripe Solutions has now coached pilots into close to 40 airlines in 20 countries. I then self-published a book on how to talk about yourself in a job interview, *The Albino Chameleon: The Things That Make You ‘You’ Can Become Your Super Power*. Despite releasing it during the pandemic, it sold in 15 countries. Because the aviation industry shut down during COVID, my friend and I came up with the idea of using our pilot interview training skills to create an online course for high school students, called *High School to Hireable*.

“My second marriage ended amid all this and I’m now happily flying solo. With both my businesses currently thriving, I’m loving my latest reinvention. I celebrated my 58th birthday this year by doing a six-day horse-riding trek in the Victorian Alps, because you’re never too old to go get it.”

My best advice

“Perfectionism and needing to know what’s happening in advance makes people stuck. So, begin something new without planning too far ahead or trying to be in control of everything. Just start and see where it goes!”

RECLAIM YOUR FITNESS

Had to cancel your Pilates class for the third time this week because you have a looming work deadline? You’re not alone, says Rebecca Sabine, senior physiotherapist and managing director of Adelaide’s Vital Core Physiotherapy.

“Women in their 40s often look after everyone else first and don’t have enough time left over to spend on their own physical and mental wellbeing,” she says. “As a result, they lose fitness and are more prone to injuries. They start to produce less oestrogen, which is important for muscle development, mental health and so much more. The worse they feel, the less they want to work out. It’s a vicious circle.”

Rebooting your tired old exercise routine can not only kick-start your motivation, it may also protect you from injury. “If you’re doing intense HIIT classes, you may find that you have to take a break or quit after a few weeks because you’re too sore or you’ve injured yourself,” says Rebecca. “Our bodies are changing at that age and we don’t recover as well as we used to, so we need to start tweaking the way we exercise to reflect what our bodies need.”

Rebecca recommends seeing a physiotherapist who specialises in women over 40. “If your local physio clinic doesn’t have one, they should be able to refer you to one,” she explains. “Your physio will screen you for underlying health conditions, ask you about your fitness goals and develop a plan for you. For the average woman in midlife, it’ll include 150 minutes of physical activity that leaves you puffed, like brisk walking or gardening, and two resistance training sessions per week. That could be at a gym, or your physio can give you a simple home program.”

Once you have your fitness program, aim to put on your workout gear as soon as you wake up or get home from work (or whenever you like to exercise). “You’ll be more likely to do something active if you’re already dressed for it,” Rebecca says. “When you drop the kids off at sport, instead of going home to start dinner, head out for a walk. Listening to a podcast while you’re walking will make time fly by.”

Whatever you do, don’t ignore any pelvic floor problems, including incontinence, pain, prolapse and sexual dysfunction. “They’re so common, but so many women wait until they’ve had these issues for years before they see a pelvic floor specialist,” she says. “Come and see us as soon as possible so we can help get these things fixed.”

SLASH AND BURN

It's something that 40 per cent of women will experience in their lifetime, yet cystitis, or inflammation of the bladder, gets little attention and inadequate treatment. Let's change that.

BY BELLA EVENNETT-WATTS

Did you know?

The female urethra is only 4cm long, which gives bacteria easy access to the bladder.

SOURCE: BETTER HEALTH CHANNEL

Some things simply can't wait. Like ice-cream melting. A car needing its rego. Or when 'bursting' for a pee is no longer metaphorical. That's how I feel when I have cystitis. About 40 per cent of women will experience cystitis at some point in their life, but, despite all the strides we've been making in women's health recently – talking openly about periods, menopause and more – many of us are still suffering from this urinary tract infection (UTI) in silence.

WHAT IS CYSTITIS?

"Acute cystitis is inflammation of the bladder, which can lead to severe pain and needing to pee more often," says Dr Catriona Anderson, a GP with a special interest in women's health and UTIs. "Most sufferers recover quite quickly, but, for some, the symptoms keep coming back and never go away." If you have three or more episodes in the space of a year, this is considered recurrent cystitis – something I've suffered from since I was 16.

From writhing in pain as a teenager during a four-hour car journey to the swallow-me-up moment when I wet myself in a shop, cystitis has long been a looming dread; a constant undercurrent of 'When next?' My unwanted ►

> *During perimenopause, oestrogen starts to decline, so we lose that lubrication within our vaginal walls. This increases the risk of cystitis.*

companion has got in the way of work, sex and my social life. Cystitis can even influence how you feel, thanks to bacteria-releasing toxins. “E. coli, the bacteria responsible for 90 per cent of UTIs, releases lipopolysaccharides [bacterial toxins] into your bloodstream, which creates a shock-like reaction,” explains Dr Anderson. “It can make you feel confused, hot, shivery, shaky – not yourself at all.”

MORE THAN JUST A ‘HONEYMOON’ CONDITION

Many of us feel embarrassed to say we have cystitis, thanks to its reputation of being caused by a busy sex life. But, this isn’t the whole picture. “The act of sex does push germs around the urethra, which is why it’s always a good idea to pee before and after sex, but cystitis can occur any time – sex or not,” explains Dr Anderson. “For one of my patients, the heartbreak following a recent break-up led to a massive flare-up. She hadn’t been having sex, but, for her, stress played a major role.”

Sugar, caffeine, dehydration, acidic foods and jacuzzis can all be triggers. And, although cystitis is often considered a young women’s affliction, perimenopause can heighten the chances. “Oestrogen helps lubrication within the vagina,” says GP Dr Shahzadi Harper, known as The Perimenopause Doctor. “During perimenopause, it starts to decline, so we lose that plumpness within our vaginal walls and we lose lubrication. This increases the risk of cystitis.”

CRANBERRIES: MIRACLE CURE OR MYTH?

“There’s mixed evidence,” says nutritionist Alex Glover. “Cranberries are rich in proanthocyanidins, which may help the urethra lining and prevent bad bacteria build-up, but the evidence isn’t consistent.”

Even genetics can have an influence. “There’s a mutation on bladder cells called TLR5 SNP; 10 per cent of the population have this, while 60 per cent of people with recurrent UTIs have it,” notes Dr Anderson.

PROMISING TREATMENTS

As with so many afflictions and conditions that disproportionately affect women, cystitis doesn’t receive the medical attention it deserves. Minor, one-off cases often clear up with hydration, regular peeing (flushing out the bacteria) and natural supplements. Many women are told to drink water and cranberry juice, or take cranberry supplements. According to Jean Hailes for Women’s Health, the benefit of a cranberry supplement depends on the amount of key compounds called proanthocyanidins, or PACs. They recommend looking for a supplement that contains a daily dose of 36mg of PACs. There’s also a newer supplement, called D-mannose, which is showing promise for treating recurring UTIs. D-mannose works against the bacteria E. coli and klebsiella, and a recent study found that taking it as a supplement was as effective as taking an antibiotic for reducing UTIs.

PROGRESS NEEDED

Meanwhile, Dr Anderson believes we need to adopt a slower approach to antibiotics; doctors frequently prescribe intensive three-day courses, but she says studies show that courses lasting five to seven days are more effective. She notes that GPs are often reluctant to prescribe antibiotics at all for ‘less severe’ cases of cystitis, due to very real concerns about antibiotic resistance. But this is leaving thousands of women dealing with pain. In the meantime, we can all bring this lonely issue away from the solitude of toilet cubicles. The more honest we can be about the disruption and pain it causes, the better.

Cotton underwear allows air flow, meaning less opportunity for bacteria to grow.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

4 WAYS TO HELP REDUCE CYSTITIS SYMPTOMS

1. THROW OUT YOUR G-STRINGS
"They're a superhighway for bacteria," says Dr Anderson. "Cotton underwear is best, and wear looser-fitting jeans or trousers with elastic waistbands, rather than tight clothing that rubs. Also, have showers instead of baths, as water can carry bugs up the urethra."

2. AVOID ACID AND SPICE
"Citrus fruits, tomatoes, vitamin C, artificial sweeteners, coffee, tea, carbonated and alcoholic beverages and spicy foods may exacerbate symptoms," says nutritionist Alex.

3. TRUST YOUR GUT
Dietitian Dr Sammie Gill says looking after gut health could help prevent cystitis. "An imbalanced gut microbiome may increase the opportunity for UTIs," she explains. "Uropathogens in the gut have been shown to be a risk factor for UTIs in those with kidney transplants." That means upping your daily intake of fresh food and veg.

4. GET COMFORTABLE
For menopause-related cystitis, Dr Harper recommends using a vaginal moisturising gel to help relieve dryness, discomfort and itching. P

Did you know?

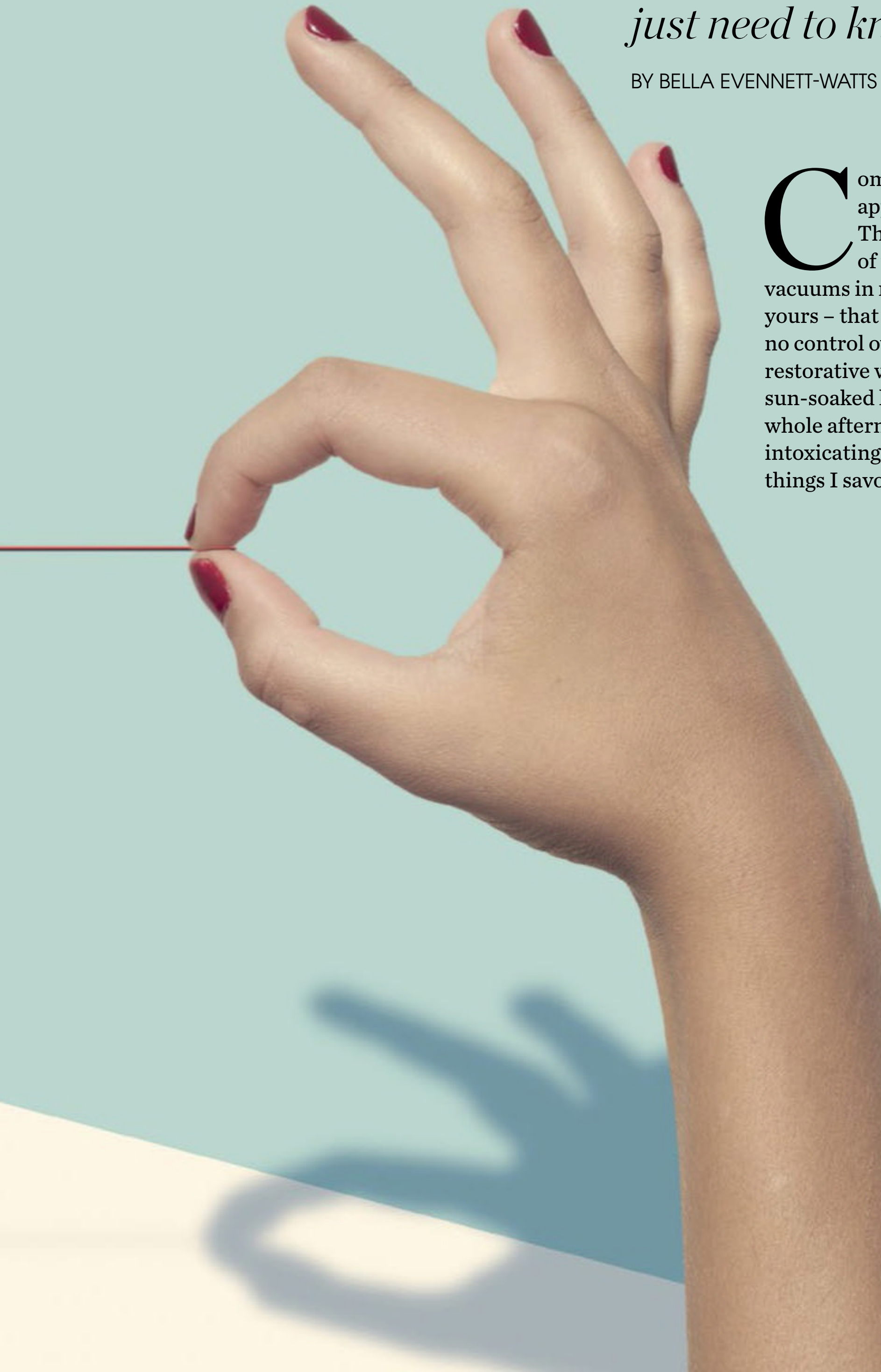
87 per cent of Aussie managers say their staff experience some boredom on the job.

SOURCE: ROBERT HALF TALENT SOLUTIONS

Doing time

Feel like there's never enough time in the day? There's actually more time than you realise – you just need to know how to find it.

BY BELLA EVENNETT-WATTS



Commuting, doctor's appointments, laundry... These are just a few of the time-hungry vacuums in my life – and probably yours – that I feel I have absolutely no control over. Meanwhile, restorative weekend strolls, sun-soaked lunches with friends, whole afternoons spent with an intoxicating book – these are the things I savour, but rarely do. ►

> I didn't want to speed through my life – I wanted more time, not just to get more done, but also to experience the hours...

When tasked with the question of when I last had time on my hands, perhaps it's most telling that I'm struck more by the metaphor than the answer: an image of sand silently slipping through my fingers, me not quite knowing how to make it stop.

According to Professor Cassie Holmes, an award-winning management expert, there are tricks to managing your time well. Research says time efficacy isn't as simple as adding hours together – it's how they're arranged that can have a significant impact on your happiness.

"A useful exercise is to think of your time as an empty jar that you're going to fill," she explains. "First you put in the golf balls, which represent the most precious things: family, friends, health, passions. Then you add the pebbles, which are also important: your job, your home. And, finally, you fill the rest of the jar with sand: the small stuff that fills your time, such as chores and checking emails. What would happen if you poured in the sand first? There wouldn't be enough space for the golf balls. When you prioritise things that don't matter, your time gets filled."

Professor Holmes herself knows the frustrations of feeling time poor. In 2013, between trying to be a good parent and partner, the incessant pressure to publish and perform at work, and the never-ending pile of chores, she found herself sitting on a late-night train home from her job as a business school professor, contemplating quitting it all.

"There just weren't enough hours in the day to get it all done, let alone to do any of it well," she recalls. "I didn't want to speed through my life – I wanted more time, not just to get more done, but also to slow down and fully experience the hours that I spent."

Over the next few months, Professor Holmes began researching time poverty, consulting studies and conducting experiments, so she could inform any future decisions about her life with what she knew best: data. The results, she says, were illuminating: having less than two hours of discretionary time in our day was detrimental to happiness, but having more than five hours – too much time – wasn't beneficial either.

Inspired to make a change, she set about doing a time audit of her own life, discovering patterns in how she spent her happiest moments. "One of the things I noticed was that my cheery mood generally relied on being in a bright environment, preferably outdoors, and this partly drove my decision to move my job to [a warmer climate], where I could spend more time in the sunshine," she says.

Now, Professor Holmes has switched her focus from teaching business to happiness, with her popular MBA course, Applying the Science of Happiness to Life Design, giving students the tools to craft their own time – not just in their day-to-day, but across their life, too.

"By spending more time on activities that deliver happiness and less on those that don't, we can help ourselves to enjoy happier hours, which add up to brighter days and more fulfilling lives," she says. "It's not so much a question of the time we have, but how we spend it and allocating the hours to achieve outcomes that actually matter."

Here, Professor Holmes reveals her tips and strategies for crafting your time better, so you can achieve your own happiness goals.

Studies show that it's easier to take in information when it's written out in front of you.

IDENTIFY YOUR MOST AND LEAST HAPPY TIMES

We all have to do activities we don't enjoy, but learning what they are is a step towards crafting a happier life. By identifying which activities promise the greatest contentment and which ways aren't worth your time, you can invest your time more wisely. The best way to do this is to track how you're spending your time throughout each day for a week or two, together with how you feel during that time. I call this the Time Tracking Exercise.

TRY THIS: Grab a notebook or a piece of paper and sketch out a timetable that breaks up your waking hours into half-hour increments. For each 30-minute section, jot down what you did and how you felt on a 10-point scale. Now skim through your data and find the three most highly rated activities. Follow the same steps for your least happy activities and note down the following: what type of activity was it? Where did it take place? And with whom? Finally, look across the common positives and negatives, and write these down. For example, from analysing my own tracked time, I was struck by two observations: all my happiest activities were either outside or in open space and/or involved having one-on-one conversations. ►

Did you know?

On average, it takes about 25 minutes to return to an original task after an interruption.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

WORK OUT YOUR PURPOSE

While work tends to feature lower on our happiness scale, it does hold meaning for most people, and it's proven that greater contentment at work carries over into our satisfaction with life overall. Research has also shown that those who have a best friend at work are twice as likely to feel engaged in their jobs. With such a large chunk of our life spent in the office, it's wasteful to spend those hours feeling miserable. So, it's worth thinking about what makes your role worthwhile.

TRY THIS: Ask yourself: Why do I do the work that I do? First answers typically involve making money. Then ask: Why does my job matter to me? Keep delving until you've answered five layers of 'why' and you'll likely arrive at the heart of why you do your work. In my case, my job description is to conduct research, teach and do admin for the university. My initial answer to the question was that my purpose is to create and disseminate knowledge, but, more honestly, what I really care about is happiness. I want my students to be smarter in making decisions that'll affect the satisfaction they feel about their life. Just knowing why you do what you do, and focusing on that, can help make your workdays more enjoyable, but also guide you to reconfigure those hours so they're happier.

CREATE LITTLE 'BUNDLES' OF TIME

Now that you've identified which investments are most fulfilling, are there any clear places where you could buy yourself better time? While outsourcing chores may be one option, you can also apply a 'bundling' strategy. This is the idea that you can make any activity you don't enjoy more tempting by combining it with an activity that is – for example, you might listen to an audiobook while on the treadmill, or call a friend while folding laundry. Commuting is typically onerous time, but, by tying it to something else you value, you can invest this period in happier ways.

TRY THIS: If you can't bundle, look at what you can outsource. It could be that you do your supermarket shop online and have it delivered, or you use a meal kit delivery service, such as HelloFresh, to speed up cooking on those busy days, or car pooling with a friend so the commute to work or regular activities become more enjoyable. You can then reinvest the time you've saved in more fulfilling ways.

Nature walks reduce stress and lift your mood far better than urban strolls, research shows.

INCREASE YOUR TIME AFFLUENCE

Many people live in a scarcity mindset, but you have all you need to be able to dedicate hours to what really matters. Time isn't always about what's efficient; it's also about what's worthwhile and, despite our tendency to be stingy with our time when we feel time poor, spending time on others actually increases feelings of self-efficacy – our belief in our capacity to act in the ways that'll help us reach specific goals. Utilising 30 minutes to call that friend to check in on her new job, or waiting those few seconds to hold open the door for someone, can actually make you feel more time rich. The same can be said for exercise: you might feel you don't have enough time for it, but it can improve self-esteem and increase the time you feel you have. Research also shows that by engaging in what we call 'awe-inspiring events' – positive social interactions, nature, art – you can feel less hurried and heighten the feeling of plenty.

TRY THIS: Exercise for at least 30 minutes every day for at least two weeks. Mark these times in your schedule to commit to. (I always work out first thing on a Monday morning, as that's when I typically feel most in a hurry.) Then, right after, leave yourself a voice message or written note communicating how you're feeling. This will serve as a reminder: you can make the time and it's worth it. ►

CALCULATE THE TIMES YOU HAVE LEFT

We have a psychological tendency to get used to stuff over time. Doing the same thing or being with the same person again and again lowers its impact on our emotional experience. Four years after my awakening on the train, we were living the dream – which included walking my son, Leo, to preschool every morning. When we first started, I'd notice the flowers along our route, but, after walking the same path for months, I stopped noticing. One morning, as Leo was skipping along behind me and I was mentally cycling through my day's to-do list, I felt the mounting panic of not being able to get it all done. At one point, I turned around to see him burying his face in a bush of roses. "Leo," I shouted over my shoulder, "we don't have time to stop and smell the roses!" Looking back, it was so ridiculously on the nose. If I had realised how few mornings I had left of walking Leo, I would've paid more attention – and definitely smelled the roses.

TRY THIS: Work out how many times you've performed an activity you enjoy and how many opportunities you'll have to do it in the future. For example, I classed walking Leo to preschool as an everyday activity, but, after calculating, I realised we only had 20 per cent of our times doing the walk left. The phrase 'this too shall pass' doesn't only help get you through hard periods, it also reminds you to pause so you don't miss out on the good ones.

TAKE A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Data shows that individuals who see the big picture of their life tend to report greater satisfaction and meaning. Zooming out in this way is helpful because it reminds you that, even if you can't do everything at once, you can accomplish a range of pursuits over the course of a lifetime. Looking across your years also makes you realise that the concerns that feel pressing today aren't the same as those that plagued you in your teens, and they won't be the same as the challenges that keep you up at night in your twilight years. So, you don't have to spend your days in such a hurry.

TRY THIS: Draw out nine rows of 10 circles. If you lived until 90, this would be the visual depiction of your life. Next, imagine your life in months (1080 smaller circles), weeks (4680 even smaller circles) and, finally, days (32,850 dots). Seeing your life like this can help you to perceive that your time is countable. My career may last 40 years, but I have another 25 years to allocate post-retirement. Similarly, my children will live with me for about 18 years of my career years – less than half of that.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK

HOW TO
TIME CRAFT

Professor Holmes shares how to invest your time for greater satisfaction and to design your weeks with purpose.

1 **START BY CREATING** a blank week schedule as your canvas (you can do this by hand or print one out at cassiemholmes.com).

2 **PENCIL IN THE** required activities you have each week with set times (but don't block out times completely, as you can bundle them).

3 **NOW NOTE DOWN** your most joyful activities. Dedicate your best hours to your most meaningful things, particularly those that involve social connection, and block out these times completely.

4 **FIND WHERE** you can outsource chores, where you should protect times that really matter by making them a 'no-phone zone', and where you can set meaningful regular 'rituals'.

5 **NOW LOOK AT** bundling: linking activities you want to do (eg talking to a friend) with ones you have to do (eg commuting). Even better, link two tasks you want to do (eg talking to a friend and going outside for a run).

6 **IN YOUR WORKING** hours, consider when you have the most mental energy. For example, I know I'm more productive in the mornings, so I schedule 'happy work' (research and writing) then. In the afternoons, I pencil in 'worky work' (meetings, emails, admin).

7 **LEAVE PORTIONS OF** your week unfilled so you can rest, reflect and be spontaneous (perhaps schedule this as 'spontaneous' time).

8 **NOW START EDITING** by first spreading out activities you like (eg a five-hour TV session is better spaced out to five one-hour sittings a week, enhancing the enjoyment).

9 **FOR ACTIVITIES YOU** don't enjoy, bunch these into a single session (eg assign one evening for housework). Schedule positive tasks directly after negative ones – knowing something good is waiting on the other side of the foreboding event will help motivate you to attend to and get through it.

10 **FINALLY, LOOK BACK** at your plan. Consider what's missing and ask yourself when you might be able to schedule that absent activity, rather than whether you can (it's possible when you look across the weeks of your year, and the years of your life!).

> I had trouble with word finding. Sometimes I'd be unable to form words at all.

Despite her daily struggles with early onset dementia, Michelle says she won't let it define her or stand in the way of her goals. **Over page** Seeing the bright side has helped her deal with her condition.

Lost for words

When you're a busy 40-something mum, a dementia diagnosis isn't part of your future plan. But, for author and businesswoman Michelle Worthington, it's become a reality to navigate, come what may.

In 2021, Michelle Worthington was diagnosed with a form of early onset dementia. She was only 45 years old. The award-winning Brisbane-based author, speaker, entrepreneur and mum-of-three had known since 2016 that something wasn't quite right, and spent copious amounts of time visiting GPs and specialists in search of an answer – only to be told time and again that she was "too young" for it to be dementia and, as a busy mother wrangling three sons between the ages of eight and 22, likely just "tired and stressed".

"Part of me was relieved to finally get a name for what was happening to me," says Michelle. But she didn't share the information with anyone else at first. "I wanted to process [the diagnosis] myself and put some strategies in place, which I could share with my family to make the transition seem less stressful and complicated." Since that day, Michelle has tackled navigating a suddenly uncertain future with her trademark energy, and loads of support from her loved ones. Here, she shares her story.

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: BEAUTIFUL IMAGES PHOTOGRAPHY, ISTOCK

FINDING AN EXPLANATION

"I'd noticed that I started to have trouble with word finding: going to say a certain word, but a different word coming out instead. Sometimes I'd be unable to form words at all. This was happening at home as well as during professional speaking engagements. I was told that I was just stressed, that I should try mindfulness. I was referred to a psychologist, told numerous times that I was 'too young' for what I suspected might be wrong with me. But things weren't getting any better. And because I was speaking for a living, doing workshops and visiting schools, I knew this wasn't 'stress'. I know what stress is – I'm a mum with three kids! As a result, I had to learn how to start advocating for myself. It was hard. I even got pushback from my own family.

"I was finally taken seriously in 2020, when my husband had to rush me to an emergency room because I suddenly couldn't speak at all, and had a terrible panic attack. My family's strong history of dementia came up, and they put me on a waiting list to see a neurologist. One year later, I finally saw the person who eventually gave me my diagnosis. It's still an ongoing struggle, though, trying to find people who won't look for other reasons or explanations. One of the things with aphasia [a disorder that affects Michelle's communication abilities and characterises her form of dementia] is that it doesn't always present on CT scans, or even on MRIs. It can be quite sneaky! I'm still constantly going through the process of scanning and testing and working with a speech therapist. I'd say I'm kind of in the middle of it and we're not really sure where it's going to go – how long [the illness] will take [to erode ►

> You've got to try to not let 'helpless' slip into 'worthless'.

I googled my symptoms..
..turns out I need more CHICKENS!!

Michelle's abilities] or how far it'll progress. It's something that's so different for everybody.

"The thing that I've learnt about any sort of dementia is that it's a spectrum – there are many different types with different prognoses. But, the minute you use that word… I think the connotation is 'only old people get this'. But that's not true. [There are more than 28,650 people in Australia currently living with early onset dementia (including people in their 30s, 40s and 50s), and it's estimated that this figure will increase to more than 42,400 by 2058.]

[Dementia] is also something that, because of the stigma around it, people don't want to talk about. I don't know if that's coming from a place of fear or misunderstanding, but people steer clear. I hadn't even told my closest friends [about my diagnosis] until very recently. I'm starting to have trouble finding the right words while having conversations, or saying words in a silly way. So, I explained to them, 'Look, this is what's happening.'

A SENSE OF WORTH

"I've often found that, as a woman, you're not taken seriously, or it's difficult to find the right support or info, so we stay silent, doubt ourselves and put up with the pain. The thing is, we women know our bodies so well; we know what's normal! But trying to explain that to someone so that they'll take you seriously… Even looking for resources for women my age living with this condition has been challenging. I think we still don't have a platform to discuss early onset dementia in women, and it's not being taken to the medical community or to funding bodies.

"Yes, it does make me angry, because what it feels like to me is that you have to wait until it's too far gone before anyone will help you. It was infuriating to have to fight so hard, knowing that if I could get the right support now, if I could get speech therapy and talk to someone about my diet and all the things that can help my brain health right now, I'd have a much better prognosis going forward. Anger can make you feel helpless, though – and you've got to try to not let 'helpless' slip into 'worthless'. Listen to your body and honour the little voice inside your head that keeps telling you something isn't right. Don't let yourself feel discouraged or dismissed. You have to constantly, tirelessly advocate for yourself.

FAMILY STRATEGIES

"*Mama's Chickens* [a children's book written by Michelle about a family dealing with the symptoms of their mum's early onset dementia – with the help of a few backyard chooks] was inspired by what was happening to me, and our family getting some of our own chickens at that time. Writing it was a way to deal with what could possibly be my future, and being okay with it. I wanted to look at things from the perspective of how I was going to explain it to my kids and give them the coping mechanisms they need.

"I'm lucky that my husband, sons and I all have a really strange sense of humour. I think the ability to laugh at yourself is so underestimated! Sometimes, if I say something and use the wrong word, my kids will giggle and have a go at me. 'Yes, Mum, let's put the milk back in the elephant!' [instead of fridge]. They make me laugh at myself

and, when it gets overwhelming, they know and tell me to 'breathe, stop'. The things that I've helped them with, like anxiety and everything kids go through, they help me with now. They're smart, and I think that's also one of the things I wanted to show in the book: we forget how resilient kids are and that they have the ability to not only understand something, but also be great supporters. If you give them that agency and say, 'You know, I'm not okay, I'm going to need you to help me for a bit,' they actually really thrive on that. They love feeling like they can be of some assistance.

"It's a little bit different for my husband, because he relies on me so much and says, 'I can't have you not be you.' But we talk to each other about strategies. We practise talking by using hand signals, for example, and communicating without words. We'll do something and purposely not speak, so that we get to know and read how we move around each other. It probably seems a little bit strange, but that's me being able to help him to know that, even if I can't talk, I'm still here and able to help. That's where keeping a positive prognosis in mind is important. I'm losing control of so many aspects of my life that I feel this is one part of my life I can keep control of: how I think positively, focus on my kids and look for practical ways to help on a day-to-day basis.

TAKING IT DAY BY DAY

"I used to have up to four speaking engagements a week, but speaking now is like running a marathon. I'm cutting back because it's just so exhausting forming words. I have strategies that I've worked out with a speech therapist, though. For example, sometimes when I'm really tired, I 'type' the words in my head, like a typewriter, and then 'read' what I've 'typed' – that's one way I can kind of overcome word finding, which is my big thing. I'll be doing a school visit, for example, and I'll be in the middle of a sentence, and then, that's it – the rest of the sentence just disappears. So, then I either have to change everything I'd been saying or wait for the word to come.

"I'm trying to be as holistic as I can taking care of myself, focusing on preventive measures like diet, exercise and reducing stress. Generally, all my good intentions go flying out the window and I just take each day as it comes. I'm a mum first and my kids are my top priority. That can make keeping my own health front of mind a bit difficult!

> I don't want my diagnosis to define me.

REACHING GOALS

"I have to fight very hard against a sense of urgency... I think what I need to remember is that I do have time to do all the things that I want to do, despite this underlying sense of 'If I want to do it, I need to do it now.' I'm still writing every day. I think deciding on goals and then putting winning strategies in place to achieve those goals is important. At this point, I want to make sure I'm sharing as much of the stories inside my head as I can.

"Apart from being realistic about what I'm able to do, which includes cutting down on speaking engagements or anything that makes me too tired, I will go full steam ahead. I don't want my diagnosis to define me. I guess that's part of the reason I haven't told many people about it: you get judged and I don't want people to not offer me opportunities, or for me to miss out on things because of a label that I've been given. I don't see myself as some sort of 'ambassador', or someone who's going to lead the charge for change – because I'm still going through all the emotions myself, and it's exhausting. But it does feel like we need people to stand up and share their story – and that's why I'm doing it.

"It's been really hard, of course. But, even though my diagnosis is always kind of hovering, I'm able to compartmentalise a bit and go, 'Yeah, that's fair, but, right now, let's just do everything that I'm able to do.' And then tomorrow will come whether I'm ready for it or not."

MICHELLE'S DIAGNOSIS

Michelle is living with a form of dementia called progressive nonfluent aphasia (PNFA), which slowly and progressively erodes language capabilities. It can make it difficult to speak, use basic grammar, form words and sentences, or move from one sound, syllable or word to another. Sometimes words go 'missing' or get transposed, and the ability to comprehend written material can be affected.

MAMA'S CHICKENS

Mama's Chickens by Michelle Worthington (Exisle Publishing, $24.99) is available online and in bookstores now.

10

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR *HEART*

5

The number of litres of blood your heart pumps per minute – and that's just at rest!

SOURCE: WEBMD.COM

There's so much you can do to keep your heart happy and strong! Here are cool facts, must-know info and easy to-dos to help you live a long and energetic life.

Your heart is essential for survival. Part of the circulatory system, this powerful organ is responsible for pumping oxygen-rich blood and nutrients around your body. So, keeping it in tip-top condition is super important. Follow these pointers to keep your heart ticking along nicely.

1

STRETCH TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT

You know getting regular exercise is key to keeping your overall health on track, particularly that of your heart, but cardio and strength training aren't the only things that help. Stretching is an excellent way to begin and end a workout, and it's also really great for your heart – it improves blood flow, lowers blood pressure and decreases stiffness of the arteries, all of which may add up to a lower risk for heart attack and stroke. Try this: Breathe evenly, be slow and controlled (not bouncy and jerky) and hold for 10 to 30 seconds. ►

Perhaps swap sugar for a dash of milk.

2

ENJOY YOUR MORNING COFFEE

According to new research, drinking two to three cups of coffee a day is associated not only with a lower risk of heart disease and dangerous heart rhythms, but also with living longer. Just put the brakes on the caffeine by early afternoon, since you also need sleep to keep your heart healthy!

3

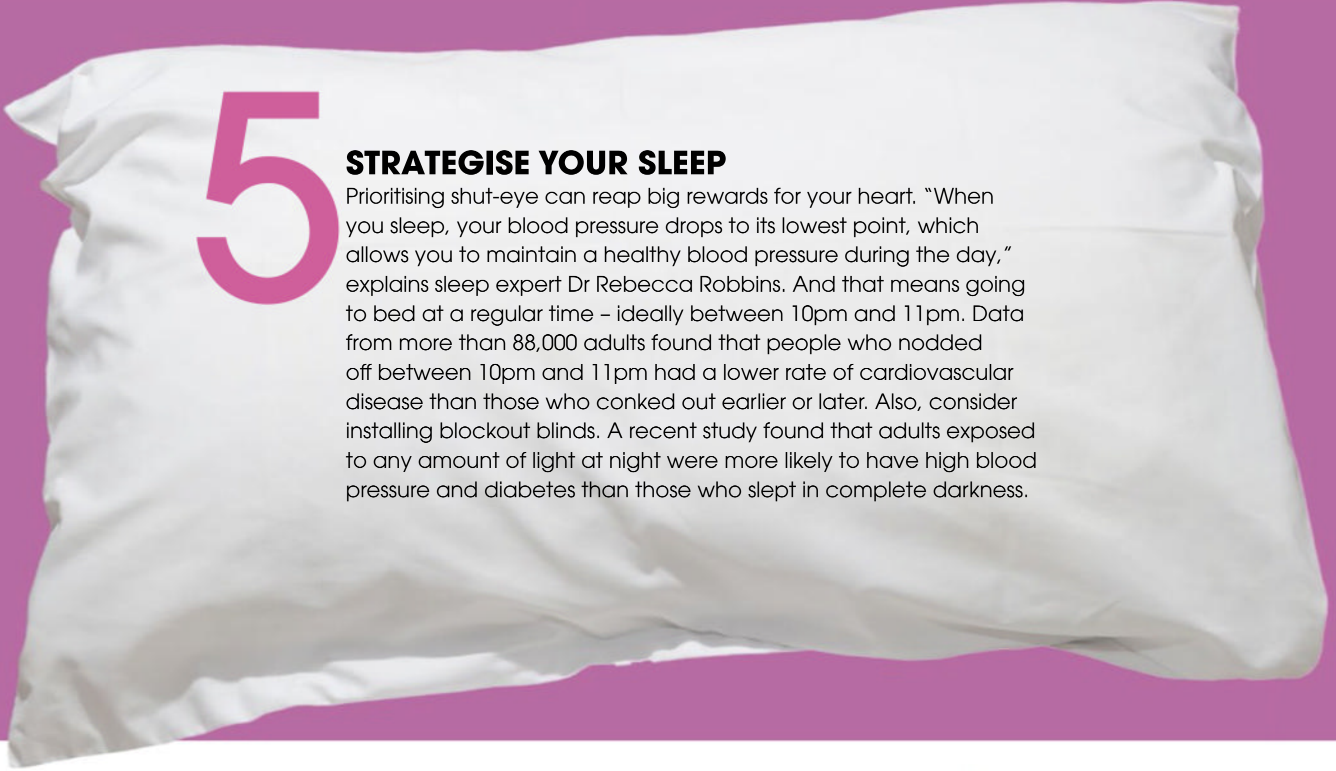
DWELL ON THE PAST

Don't assume you know everything about your health history. Ask your parents for details, and enquire about your grandparents, aunts and uncles, too, especially about any chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes. "We're especially interested in knowing if anyone in your family was diagnosed with heart disease when they were young, because that may mean there's a genetic risk," says cardiovascular specialist Dr Anjali Dutta. She suggests creating a family tree with all the info.

4

NEVER FEAR A FALSE ALARM

While it's true that many things can mimic a heart attack, including a panic attack and even reflux, always err on the side of getting checked if you're having symptoms. "We can't tell if you're having a heart attack just by looking at you," says cardiologist Dr Mary P. McGowan, who adds that doctors are trained to order a stress test when in doubt. If it's negative, everyone can breathe a sigh of relief.



5

STRATEGISE YOUR SLEEP

Prioritising shut-eye can reap big rewards for your heart. "When you sleep, your blood pressure drops to its lowest point, which allows you to maintain a healthy blood pressure during the day," explains sleep expert Dr Rebecca Robbins. And that means going to bed at a regular time – ideally between 10pm and 11pm. Data from more than 88,000 adults found that people who nodded off between 10pm and 11pm had a lower rate of cardiovascular disease than those who conked out earlier or later. Also, consider installing blockout blinds. A recent study found that adults exposed to any amount of light at night were more likely to have high blood pressure and diabetes than those who slept in complete darkness.

6

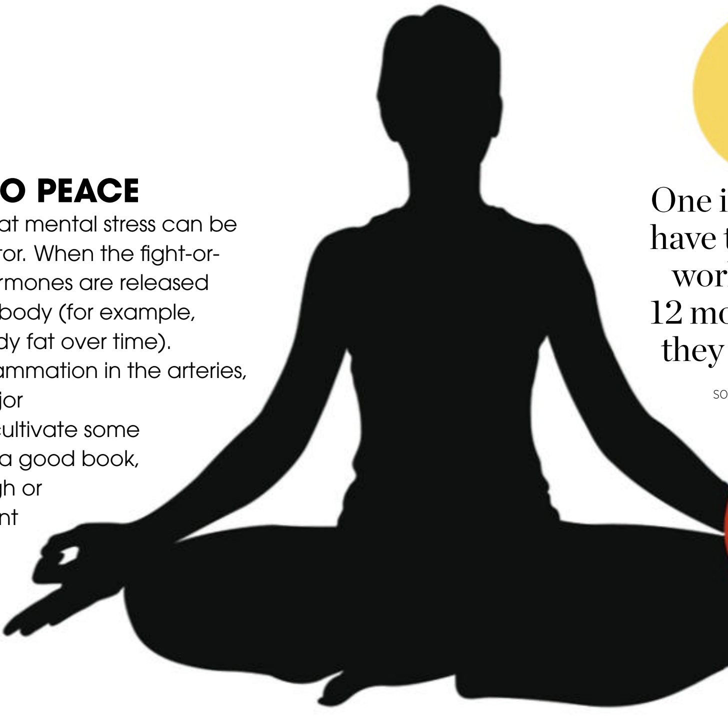
GET A LITTLE SEEDY

If you don't eat fish, you can get powerful omega-3s from walnuts and linseeds (flaxseeds). One study found that a diet rich in these was associated with a 10 per cent lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 20 per cent reduced risk of fatal coronary heart disease. Aim for a handful a day.

7

PAVE A PATH TO PEACE

Research has shown that mental stress can be a strong cardiac risk factor. When the fight-or-flight response kicks in, hormones are released that cause changes in the body (for example, increasing blood pressure and body fat over time). Stress also brings about higher inflammation in the arteries, and chronic inflammation has major potential to harm your heart. So, cultivate some chill-out tactics, like getting lost in a good book, catching up with friends for a laugh or doing yoga or meditation. Frequent breaks will give your body a chance to reset itself and help prevent burnout. ►



Fast fact

One in five Aussies have taken time off work in the past 12 months because they felt stressed.

SOURCE: HEADSUP.ORG.AU

SIGNS OF A *HEART ATTACK* IN *WOMEN*

That uncomfortable squeezing in your chest… It's probably from the pizza you just inhaled, but, still, at this moment, it's not a giant leap from "Pass the Quick Eze" to "Oh, no, could it be my heart?!" Since only one in three women who have a heart attack experience commonly depicted heart attack symptoms, such as pain in the chest, it pays to know these signs.

Upper back pressure that feels like squeezing

Unexplained pain in the back, neck, jaw or arms (just not the left arm, common for men)

Pressure or a feeling of fullness in the chest

Sudden nausea and/or vomiting

Depression (a sudden sense of foreboding and gloom)

Dizziness, light-headedness or fainting

Persistent and extreme fatigue

Shortness of breath, even without activity

Ongoing indigestion

Did you know?

About 40 per cent of heart attacks in Aussie women are fatal, and many occur without prior warning.

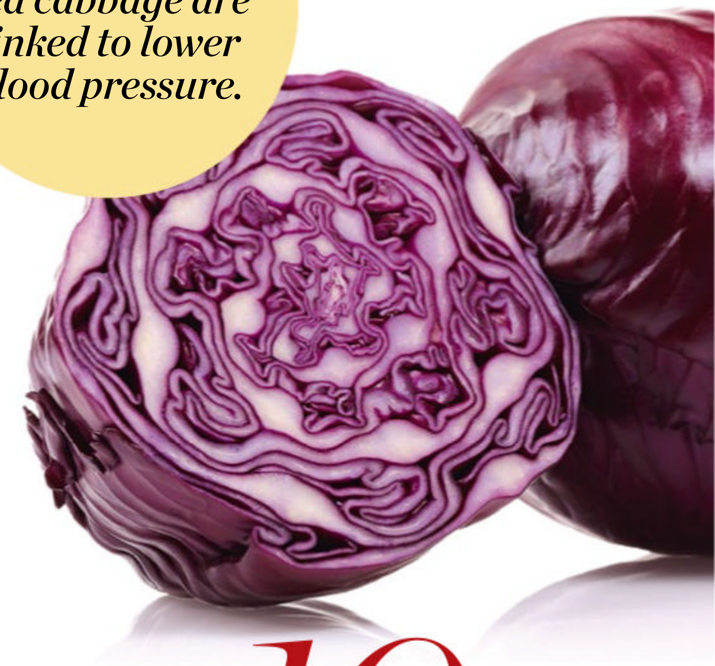
PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK

8

SPEED UP

Even if you don't get in 10,000 steps a day, every step counts. And you can pump up the power of your walks by going faster. New research, published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* and *JAMA Neurology*, found that the quicker you walk, the greater the benefit. So, get your brisk on!

Anthocyanins (pigments) in red cabbage are linked to lower blood pressure.



89cm

The waist measurement (or more) of women who are more likely to have excess visceral fat.

SOURCE: MAYO CLINIC

9

KEEP ON TOP OF BELLY FAT

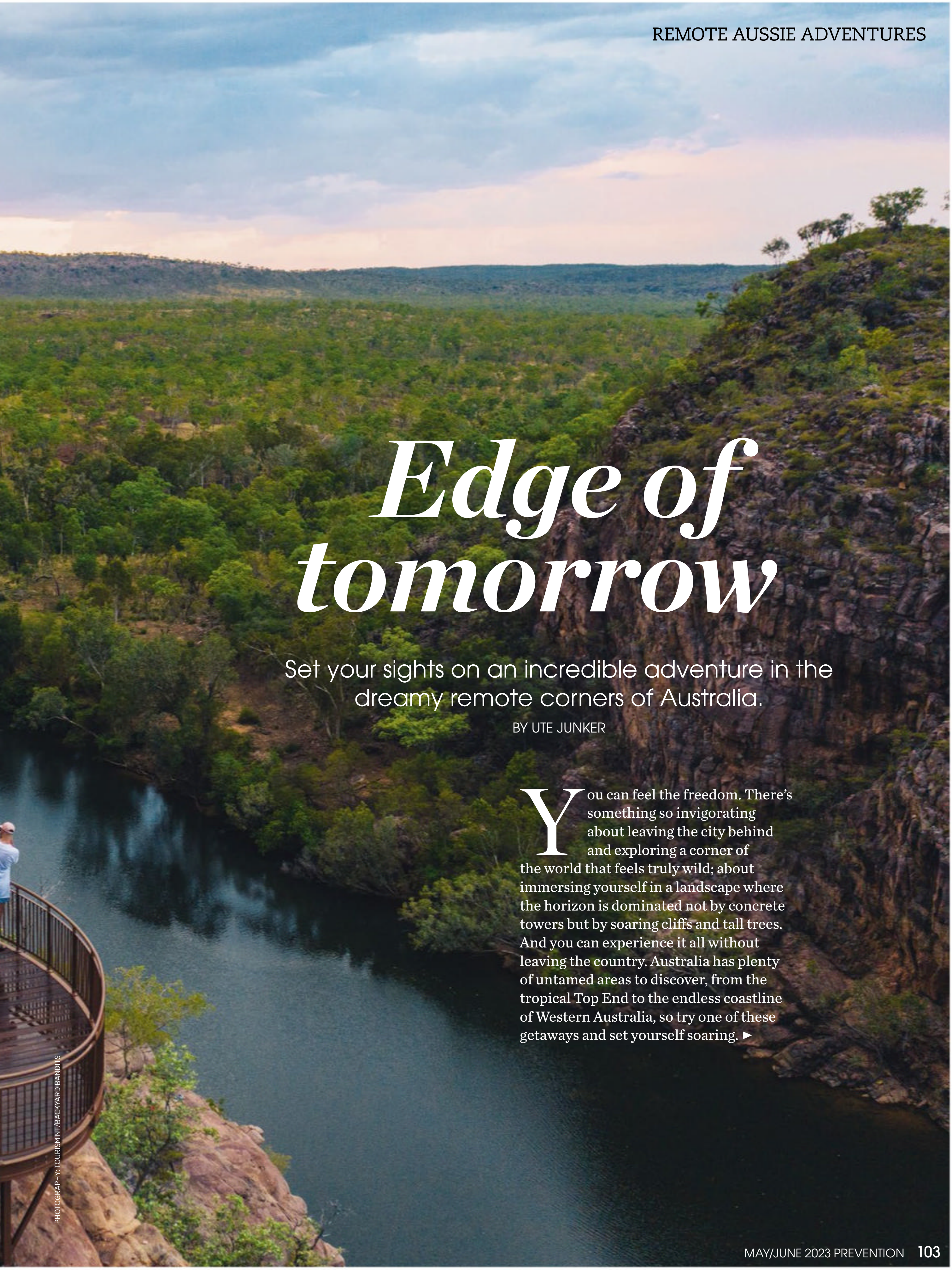
It's not the tummy fat you can see that's making your jeans tight that's risky – it's the fat you can't spot, called visceral fat, and one clue that it exists is excess belly fat. Visceral fat, located deep in the abdominal cavity, wraps around organs and messes with hormones – all of which impacts your heart, even if your weight is healthy. So, next time you're at the doctor's, ask for an expert evaluation.

10

EMBRACE CRUNCH TIME

That's cruciferous vegies, not stressful deadlines. In a recent study, women who ate more than 45g of cruciferous vegetables (½ cup of raw cabbage or ¼ cup of steamed broccoli) a day had healthier blood vessels than those who ate very small amounts. Psst: Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and bok choy count, too!

Step out over the Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge at the Baruwei Lookout and take in all of its rugged beauty, as well as the breathtaking views across the Nitmiluk National Park, in the Northern Territory.



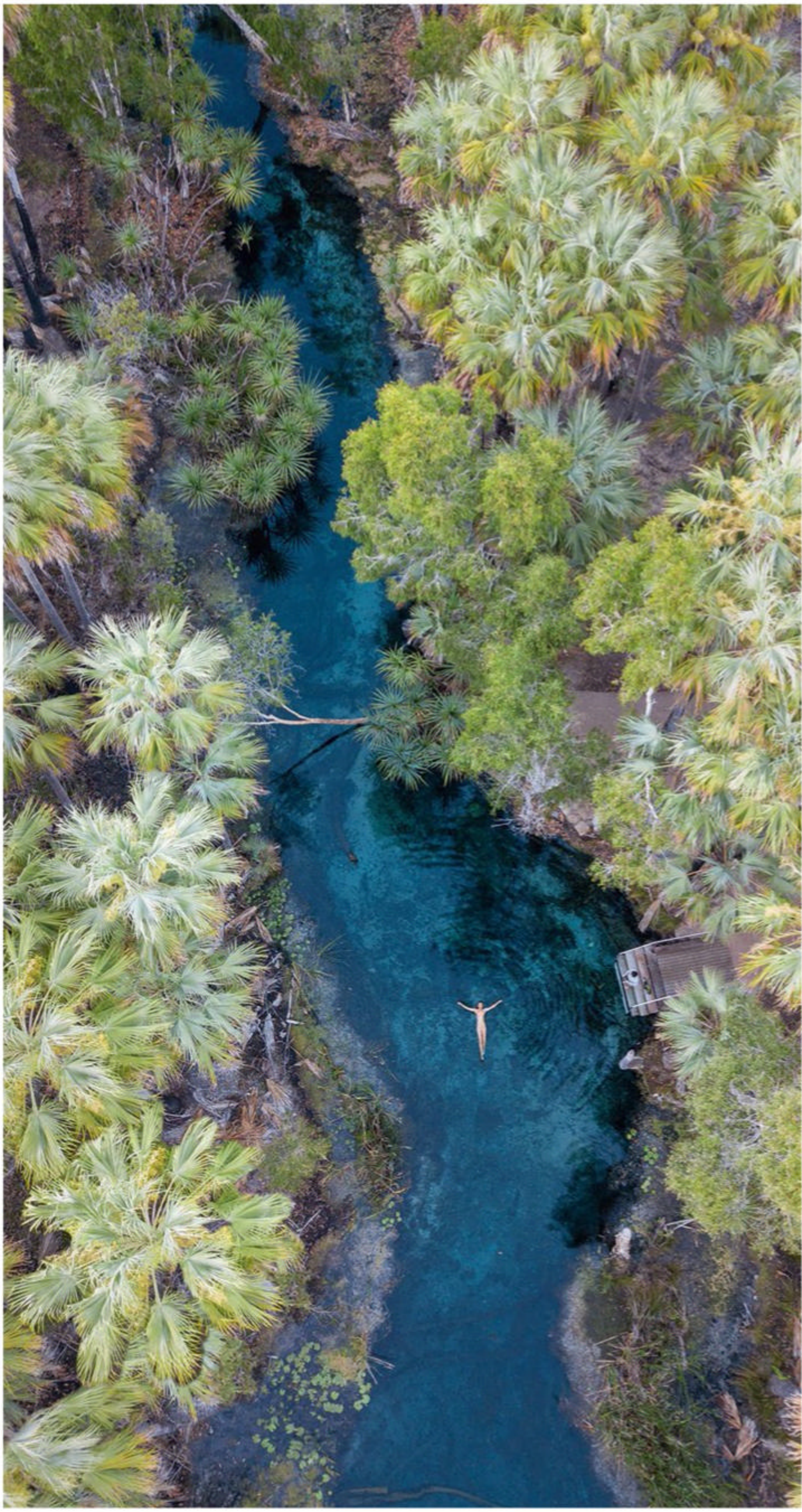
Edge of tomorrow

Set your sights on an incredible adventure in the dreamy remote corners of Australia.

BY UTE JUNKER

You can feel the freedom. There's something so invigorating about leaving the city behind and exploring a corner of the world that feels truly wild; about immersing yourself in a landscape where the horizon is dominated not by concrete towers but by soaring cliffs and tall trees. And you can experience it all without leaving the country. Australia has plenty of untamed areas to discover, from the tropical Top End to the endless coastline of Western Australia, so try one of these getaways and set yourself soaring. ►

PHOTOGRAPHY: TOURISM NT/BACKYARD BANDITS



Plunge into the *Top End, NT*

Cruising down the East Alligator River in the late afternoon is a chance to exhale. As the sun slowly sinks towards the ground, its slanting rays add a glow to everything they touch. Water lily leaves shine like emeralds; the sandstone escarpments that rise on the horizon are transformed into cliffs of gold. An air of calm sits over everything. Even the cormorants and egrets wading near the shoreline in search of dinner have an unhurried air.

Three hours' drive from Darwin, Kakadu National Park – one of Australia's largest – is a great place to play explorer. Hidden away inside its 20,000 square kilometres, you'll find stunning landscapes to get lost in, from rainforests to wetlands, thundering waterfalls to quiet swimming holes. Start by learning more about the park's indigenous history and how the Bininj/Mungguy people lived in harmony with the land for tens of thousands of years. Among their legacies is one of the world's largest concentrations of rock art, a treasure trove of images that draws visitors from around the world. Made using crushed pigments and brushes of human hair, feathers and reeds, some of these rock paintings date back an extraordinary 20,000 years.

The most amazing sites include Burrungkuy (Nourlangie), used for many years as a shelter during the wet season, and Ubirr, where the range of artistic styles on display includes the distinctive X-ray art. Other highlights include 'contact art' that depicts early encounters with Europeans (the 'whitefella' with his hands in his pockets is particularly arresting) and perhaps even the famous drawing of a thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger, a species that vanished from the mainland about 3000 years ago.

Burrungkuy and Ubirr are on most people's must-see lists, alongside the cascades at Jim Jim and Twin Falls. But, if you prefer to go a little off the beaten track, there are lots of places in the park where you can savour the solitude. Getting to the enchanting Maguk waterhole is an adventure (after driving down the four-wheel drive track, it's a one-kilometre walk through the monsoon forest), but once you're floating in the forest-fringed pool, looking up at the spangled drongos that flit through the trees, you'll be glad you made the effort.

Kakadu may be the Top End's most known attraction, but there are plenty of other marvels

Canoeing not only increases muscle strength, especially in the back, arms and shoulders, but also is a tranquil way to experience your surroundings.

to discover among the wide-open plains and sandstone escarpments of the Northern Territory. Keep following the road south through Kakadu and you'll eventually reach Katherine, a laidback town surrounded by some remarkable destinations. The most famous is Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge, actually a series of 13 deep water-filled gorges, a welcome oasis in this dry sandstone country. It's a place that has to be explored from the water as well as the land. Start with a canoe trip through the gorge or join one of the relaxing cruises. Then slip on your walking shoes to tackle the Jatbula Trail.

Winding its way between Nitmiluk Gorge and Leliyn, or Edith Falls, the track follows the paths travelled for thousands of years by the Jawoyn traditional custodians. The trail stretches for 62 kilometres sweeping through a range of environments, including woodlands, monsoon forests and sandstone plateau scrub, but you can tackle one or two sections as a day trip.

Cool off in Elsey National Park, where a series of thermal pools and springs offers relief for weary muscles. Shaded by palm forest, paperbarks and pandanus, Bitter Springs and Mataranka Thermal Pool are excellent areas to spend a relaxing afternoon. And don't forget Litchfield National Park. Just 90 minutes' drive from Darwin, Litchfield's collection of swim spots may be the best in the Top End, with something to suit everyone.

Families will want to head to Buley Rockhole, a shallow set of rapids studded with pools just big enough to cool off in. The nearby Florence Falls, with its twin waterfalls, is another popular place for a dip. Further afield, Tjaetaba Falls is a favourite with locals. It's a 1.5-kilometre uphill walk to reach the first of Tjaetaba's stepped pools, which means Tjaetaba is less visited than some of the more accessible sights. It's worth the effort, though. Settle yourself into the second pool, where the waterfall cascades into the pool behind you while a panoramic view across the park is spread out in front of you. The feeling of joy is simply hard to beat.

Visit tourismtopend.com.au ►

Opposite Unwind with a dip at Bitter Springs, among palms and tropical woodlands, in Elsey National Park. **Above** Explore the natural splendour of Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge on a self-guided canoe tour.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (LEFT PAGE) TOURISM NT/ALL ABOUT ADVENTURE; (RIGHT PAGE) TOURISM NT/HELEN ORR

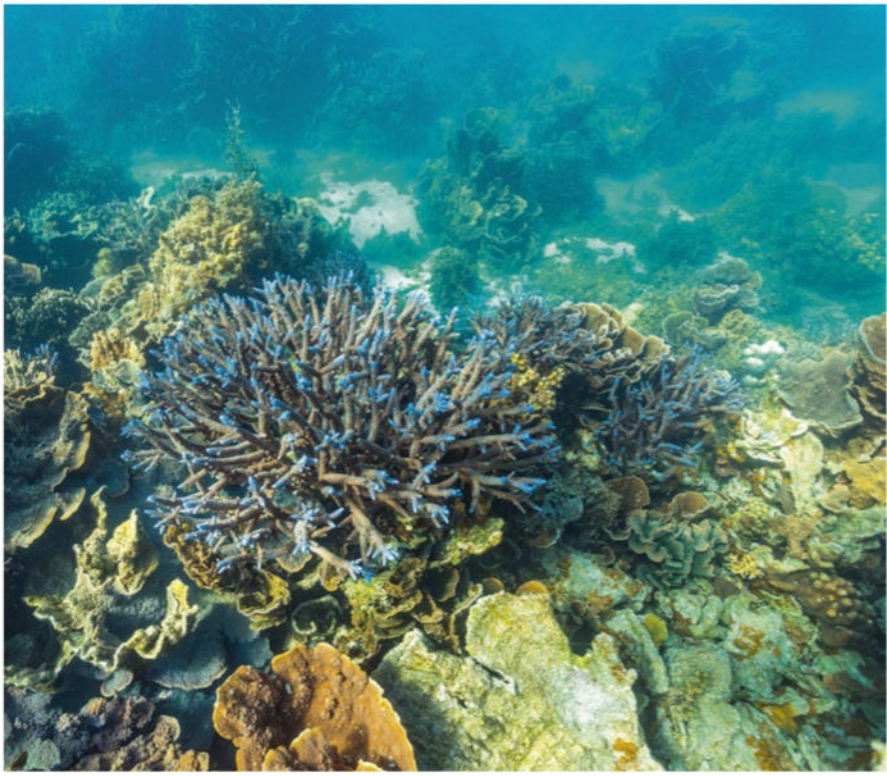
This page, from top left Discover lush rainforests, exotic wildlife and more, including beautiful native water lillies at Yellow Water billabong (bottom), at Kakadu National Park; marvel at ancient rock art in Ubirr, within the park's East Alligator region.

Be awestruck at *Ningaloo Reef, WA*

The weather is calm, the water is crystal clear, yet, as we sit on the catamaran waiting for our moment, most of us admit to feeling a trifle nervous. After all, it's not every day you opt to jump in the water and swim with some of the largest fish in the ocean. But, our spotter plane has found a whale shark nearby and the catamaran is taking us ever closer to the time when we can snorkel alongside one of these giants of the deep. A team member goes first to do a reconnaissance and we're given the all-clear.

Snorkels on, we put our faces in the water and, in an instant, fear is replaced by awe as we gaze at the amazing creature swimming towards us. Fully grown whale sharks can reach lengths of about 18 metres – or four medium-sized cars – but this one, we're later informed, is *only* about 14 metres. Trust me, that's still pretty damn big.

As it nudges closer and closer, swimming just below the surface of the ocean, accompanied by a school of smaller fish flitting beneath its sheltering bulk, we're awed by its size and incredible power, the way one lazy swish of that mighty tail propels it through the water. ►



PHOTOGRAPHY: (LEFT PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) TOURISM NT/HELLO EMILY; TOURISM NT/HELEN ORR; TOURISM NT; (RIGHT PAGE, FROM TOP) DAN AVILA; SEAN SCOTT

From top Be dazzled by colour as you snorkel through pristine water in the coral gardens at Coral Bay; get up close to a human-friendly whale shark at Ningaloo Marine Park.

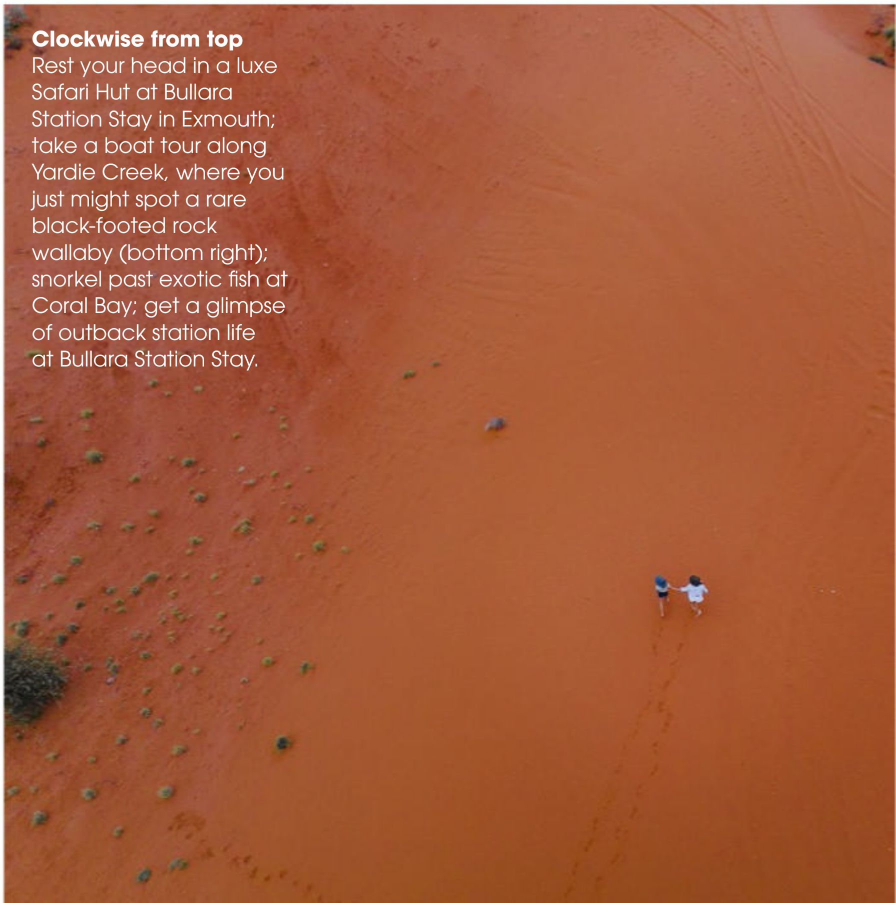
There's only one place in Australia where you can experience the thrill of swimming with whale sharks (which, despite that intimidating name, are not actually sharks but rather fish) and that's the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia. Two hours' flight north of Perth, Ningaloo is the world's largest fringing reef, stretching along the west coastline for 300 kilometres. And hanging out with whale sharks, it turns out, is just one of the memorable experiences on offer here. Want some more oceanic encounters? While whale sharks take centre stage between March and July, you can also swim with migrating humpback whales between August and October. From December to March, the action shifts to the shore as turtle nesting season kicks into gear.

Arrive six weeks later and you'll be just in time to watch the tiny hatchlings dig their way out of the sand and swim off into the wide blue ocean. Then there are the manta rays that make their home in the area. Snorkelling alongside these elegant creatures is another unforgettable experience.

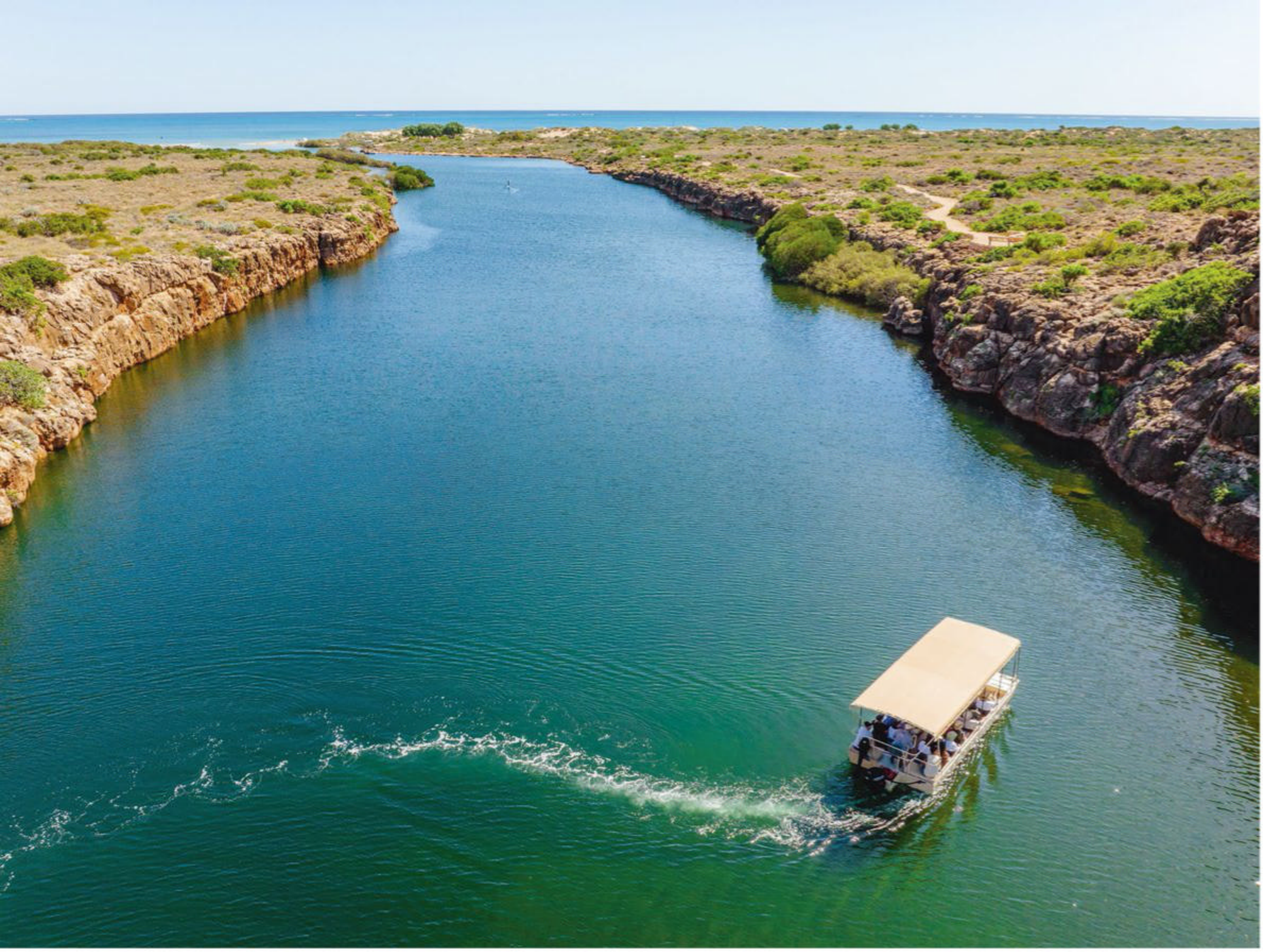
For more natural wonders, make your way to the township of Coral Bay, home to spectacular coral gardens that sit just metres from where the waves wash the golden shore. Slip on your snorkel and you'll be astonished by the magnificently coloured corals. Ningaloo is home to about 300 different species of coral, which provide habitats for no fewer than 500 different fish species.

More of a land rover? Head north to Cape Range National Park near the town of Exmouth, where emu and dingoes, echidnas and red kangaroos roam. Explore dramatic gorges, such as Mandu Mandu or Yardie Creek, and keep your eyes fixed on the rough rock faces of the ravine – black-footed rock wallabies, tiny and ultra rare, make their homes in the creviced cliff. Don't forget to bring your swimsuit: the park's gorgeous sandy beaches – Oyster Stacks, Turquoise Bay, Bloodwood Creek, among others – are excellent spots to cool off and relax.

While you're in the area, why not opt for an authentic outback station experience? Situated halfway between Exmouth and Coral Bay, Bullara Station Stay (bullarastation.com.au) offers lovely rustic accommodation among superb scenery and native wildlife. **Visit ningaloocentre.com.au** P



Clockwise from top
Rest your head in a luxe Safari Hut at Bullara Station Stay in Exmouth; take a boat tour along Yardie Creek, where you just might spot a rare black-footed rock wallaby (bottom right); snorkel past exotic fish at Coral Bay; get a glimpse of outback station life at Bullara Station Stay.



PHOTOGRAPHY: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) BASE IMAGERY (2); JAKE WILTON; DAN AVILA; BASE IMAGERY

More things to do in THE TOP END AND NINGALOO REEF

EAT Explore the rich culinary heritage of Darwin on a guided tour with Darwin Gourmet Tours (darwingourmettours.com). In Coral Bay, savour the amazing pies and fresh bread at Coral Resort Bakery (on Robinson St).

DO See Kakadu in all of its glory from above with Kakadu Air (kakaduair.com.au). In Exmouth, take the excellent 3km Mandu Mandu Walk that descends into the gorge (trailswa.com.au).

STAY Base yourself in Kakadu National Park, either in a super-comfy room or under the stars at a remote bush camp (parksaustralia.gov.au/kakadu/stay). Be just steps away from the Coral Bay shore at Ningaloo Reef Resort (parksandresorts.rac.com.au/ningaloo).

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Andrea Duvall, editor

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NUTRITIOUS & DELICIOUS

food

Healthy eating made easy

Chickpea soup (page 124)

On the menu this month ...

114
Vegie muffins – the perfect lunch on the go

118
Light-on-ingredient serves by Luke Hines

122
Gluten-free Mediterranean-style veg dishes to savour

Good for muffin

With delicious lashings of vegies and chia seeds, these healthy, fibre-rich muffins are the perfect lunch on the go. Oh, and did we mention they're also gluten free?

From left: Roast sweet potato, zucchini, feta and rosemary muffins; Bacon, cheddar, cherry tomato and chive muffins; Zucchini, caramelised onion, parmesan and thyme muffins (recipes on next page) ►

To add your own personal touch, simply use the same base recipe, but customise it with your own vegie selections.

ROAST SWEET POTATO, ZUCCHINI, FETA & ROSEMARY MUFFINS

MAKES 6 **HANDS-ON TIME** 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME 30 MINUTES

1 sweet potato, cut into 1cm cubes
1 teaspoon olive oil
1 tablespoon chia seeds
¼ cup boiling water
2 eggs
½ cup light oil (e.g. sunflower, rice bran, light olive oil) or melted butter
1 cup full-cream milk (or non-dairy alternative)
1⅔ cups gluten-free self-raising flour
¼ teaspoon bicarbonate soda, sifted
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ cup finely grated zucchini
½ cup cubed feta, plus extra to garnish
1 teaspoon finely chopped rosemary leaves, plus a little extra to garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan-forced) with the oven rack positioned in the middle of oven. Toss sweet potato in olive oil and lightly roast on a baking tray lined with baking paper for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.
2. Line a six-hole muffin tin with high-sided muffin wraps (or grease tin with a little butter or oil if not using papers).
3. Mix the chia seeds and boiling water together in a small bowl. Set aside for 2–3 minutes to form a gel.
4. Whisk the eggs, oil and milk together in a separate bowl. Tip in chia gel and whisk again to break up gel. Set aside.
5. Add dry ingredients to a large bowl and whisk well to combine. Using a spatula, tip wet mix into the dry mix and gently fold it through until just combined. (The mix should still be lumpy.) Add half the roasted sweet potato, together with the zucchini, feta and rosemary and gently fold in until just mixed.
6. Using a ¼-cup spring-loaded ice-cream scoop, take a flat scoop and empty it into a muffin tin. Repeat process so you have two scoops per muffin wrap. (The mix should be about two-thirds of the way up each muffin wrap, leaving enough room for the muffins to rise.) Garnish the top of each muffin with remaining pieces of roasted sweet potato, a few feta cubes and some finely chopped rosemary.
7. Transfer to oven and bake for about 20 minutes. Rotate tray and continue to bake for a further 10 minutes, or until muffins are lightly golden and a skewer inserted into the centre of each comes out clean. Remove muffins from the oven and leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.
Tips Fresh rosemary is preferable to dried as it's more floral and less pungent. But go easy, as it has a strong flavour. You can store muffins in an airtight container in the fridge for up to three days, or in the freezer for up to one month.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1771kJ/424cals. Protein 6.8g. Carbs 38.1g. Sat fat 6.3g. Fibre 3.1g. Sodium 681mg*

BACON, CHEDDAR, CHERRY TOMATO & CHIVE MUFFINS

MAKES 8 **HANDS-ON TIME** 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME 30 MINUTES

1 tablespoon chia seeds
¼ cup boiling water
2 eggs
½ cup light oil (e.g. sunflower, rice bran, light olive oil) or melted butter
1 cup full-cream milk (or non-dairy option)
1⅔ cups gluten-free self-raising flour
1 tablespoon gluten-free baking powder
¼ teaspoon bicarbonate soda, sifted
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
¾ cup chopped bacon
½ cup grated cheddar, plus extra to garnish
½ cup cherry tomatoes, quartered, plus extra to garnish
½ bunch fresh chives, chopped, plus extra to garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan-forced) with the oven rack positioned in the middle of the oven. Line a large eight-hole muffin tin with high-sided muffin wraps (or grease the tin with a little butter or oil if not using papers).
2. Mix the chia seeds and boiling water together in a small bowl. Set aside for 2–3 minutes to form a gel.
3. Whisk the eggs, oil and milk together in a separate bowl. Tip in the chia gel and whisk again to break up the gel. Set aside.
4. Add the dry ingredients to a large bowl and whisk well to combine. Using a spatula, tip the wet mix into the dry mix and gently fold it through until just mixed. (The mix should still be lumpy.) Add two-thirds of the bacon, and the cheddar, tomatoes and chives and gently fold in until just mixed.
5. Using a ¼-cup spring-loaded ice-cream scoop, take a flat scoop of mix and empty it into a muffin tin. Repeat the process so you have two scoops per muffin wrap. (The mix should be about two-thirds of the way up each muffin wrap, leaving room for the muffins to rise.) Garnish the top of each muffin with a few extra bacon pieces, a little cheddar, some tomato quarters and a sprinkling of chives, then transfer to the oven and bake for approximately 20 minutes.
6. Rotate the tray and continue to bake for a further 8–10 minutes, or until the muffins are lightly golden and a skewer inserted into the centre of each comes out clean. Remove the muffins from the oven and leave to cool in the tin for about 5 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.
Tips Removing the muffins from their tin to cool completely prevents them from sweating and going soggy. You can store muffins in an airtight container in the fridge for up to three days, or in the freezer for up to one month.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1328kJ/318cals. Protein 6.9g. Carbs 26.8g. Sat fat 5g. Fibre 2g. Sodium 801mg*

ZUCCHINI, CARAMELISED ONION, PARMESAN & THYME MUFFINS

MAKES 6 **HANDS-ON TIME** 30 MINUTES
COOK TIME 30 MINUTES

2 teaspoons olive oil
2 brown onions, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon chia seeds
¼ cup boiling water
2 eggs
½ cup light oil (e.g. sunflower, rice bran, light olive oil) or melted butter
1 cup full-cream milk (or non-dairy alternative)
1⅔ cups gluten-free self-raising flour
¼ teaspoon bicarbonate soda, sifted
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¾ cup finely grated zucchini, plus extra slices to garnish
½ cup grated parmesan, plus extra to garnish
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves, plus extra to garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan-forced) with the oven rack positioned in the middle of the oven. Line a large six-hole muffin tin with high-sided muffin wraps (or grease the tin with a little butter or oil if not using papers).
2. Warm a non-stick frying pan over low heat. Add the olive oil and onions and sauté for about 25–30 minutes or until caramelised (see tips). Set aside to cool completely.
3. Mix the chia seeds and boiling water together in a small bowl. Set aside for 2–3 minutes to form a gel.
4. Whisk the eggs, oil and milk together in a separate bowl. Tip in chia gel and whisk again to break up the gel. Set aside.
5. Add the dry ingredients to a large bowl and whisk well to combine. Using a spatula, tip the wet mix into the dry mix and gently fold it through until just combined. (The mix should still be lumpy.) Add the zucchini, caramelised onion, parmesan and thyme leaves, and gently fold in until just mixed.
6. Using a ¼-cup spring-loaded ice-cream scoop, take a flat scoop of the mix and empty it into a muffin tin. Repeat the process so you have two scoops per muffin wrap. (The mix should be about two-thirds of the way up each muffin wrap, leaving room for the muffins to rise.)
7. Garnish the top of each muffin with a few zucchini slices, a little grated parmesan and a few thyme leaves. Transfer to the oven and bake for approximately 20 minutes. Rotate the tray and continue to bake for a further 10 minutes, or until the muffins are lightly golden and a skewer inserted into the centre of each comes out clean.
8. Remove the muffins from the oven and leave to cool in the tin for 10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.
Tips It's really important to caramelise the onions rather than just fry them off – you're after the sweetness they develop when cooked slowly, as it's what makes these muffins so delicious. A nice, sharp parmesan is essential for offsetting the other flavours. Other sharp cheeses that work well include pecorino romano, vintage cheddar and manchego. You can store muffins in an airtight container in the fridge for up to three days, or in the freezer for up to one month.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1850kJ/443cals. Protein 8.7g. Carbs 38.2g. Sat fat 6.5g. Fibre 4.5g. Sodium 675mg*

Fast fact

Chia seeds have the highest content of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids of all plant foods. Plus, they're high in fibre to keep you feeling full.

CHERIE LYDEN
GLUTEN-FREE BAKING MADE SIMPLE

Recipes extracted from *Gluten-Free Baking Made Simple* by Cherie Lyden (Murdoch Books, $49.99). Photography by Ben Dearnley.

Light speed!

Short on time and patience? Clean-eating foodie Luke Hines serves up a few nutritious, light options that are made with just a handful of everyday ingredients.

SMASHED SALMON SALAD

SERVES 2 **HANDS-ON TIME** 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME 50 MINUTES

200g baby potatoes, skin on
4 eggs
1 baby cos lettuce, leaves separated
100g hot-smoked salmon fillet, skin removed
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
Juice of 1 lemon
¼ teaspoon chilli flakes (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 220°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Cook the potatoes in a large saucepan of salted boiling water for about 15–20 minutes, or until they can be easily pierced with a fork.
2. Carefully remove them with tongs, reserving the water to boil your eggs, and pat dry with a clean tea towel. Transfer the potatoes to the tray, leaving some space between each one.
3. Use a fork or potato masher to smash and flatten them until about 1.25cm thick – the thinner the smashed potato, the crispier it'll get. Drizzle with a tablespoon of olive oil, season to taste and bake for 20–25 minutes, or until golden brown and crispy around the edges.
4. Bring the water from the potatoes to the boil, add the eggs and cook to your liking – 4 minutes for soft-boiled, 6 minutes for medium-boiled and 8 minutes for hard-boiled. Set aside to cool.
5. Layer and overlap the lettuce leaves on one side of a share platter. Place the potatoes alongside the lettuce, then break the salmon into smaller chunks and scatter over the potatoes. Carefully peel and halve your eggs and place them, evenly spaced, on the potatoes.
6. Top with the mayonnaise, a generous squeeze of lemon juice, a sprinkle of chilli flakes, if using, season to taste and serve.
Tips: Use lettuce leaves as cups to wrap around the potato, salmon and eggs so you can enjoy all the flavours in each bite. Hot-smoked salmon fillets have a firm, flaky texture and a deep, smoky flavour and are available at most supermarkets. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge and eat for lunch or dinner the next day.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 2249kJ/538cals. Protein 25.5g. Carbs 16.1g. Sat fat 6.6g. Fibre 3g. Sodium 592mg* ►

Smoked salmon is packed with vitamin B12, which supports red blood cell formation.

BANGKOK BARRAMUNDI IN A BAG

SERVES 1 **HANDS-ON TIME** 10 MINUTES
COOK TIME 20 MINUTES

100g butternut pumpkin, cut into 5mm-thick triangle shapes
1 x 125g barramundi fillet, skin removed and pin-boned
1 tablespoon red curry paste
100g cherry tomatoes
2 tablespoons finely chopped coriander leaves
Juice of 1 lime (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C and line a baking tray with baking paper. Place a 40cm x 30cm piece of baking paper on your benchtop. To create your base, add a layer of the pumpkin triangles in the middle of the paper roughly the same width and length as the barramundi fillet. Drizzle with 1 teaspoon of olive oil and then top with the barramundi.

2. Combine the red curry paste, cherry tomatoes and three-quarters of the coriander in a small bowl and gently whisk. Pour this mixture over the barramundi, drizzle with a teaspoon of olive oil and season well with salt and pepper.

3. Bring the corners of the baking paper together and twist to enclose, then tie tightly with kitchen twine to seal in the flavours. Place on the tray and bake for 20 minutes. To check, gently open the parcel (be careful of the hot steam) – if the fish is opaque and the pumpkin is tender when pierced with the tip of a knife, it's ready. If not, bake for another 5 minutes and check again.

4. Allow the barramundi in a bag to rest for 5 minutes, then untie the twine and carefully open – be prepared for the amazing aroma to hit you. Sprinkle with the remaining coriander, add a squeeze of lime juice, if desired, and enjoy.

Tip: Barramundi is a great choice, because it holds its shape and is fairly robust and firm; salmon and ocean trout work well, too.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1439kJ/344cals. Protein 28.3g. Carbs 12g. Sat fat 3.4g. Fibre 6.2g. Sodium 1426mg*

Edited extract from *Five Kilos in 5 Weeks* by Luke Hines (Plum, $26.99). Photography by Mark Roper.

FIVE
KILOS IN
5 WEEKS
LUKE HINES

Fill-good factor

Satisfy that craving with these hearty Mediterranean-inspired vegie dishes from gluten-free recipe queen Helen Tzouganatos. Perfect for lunch or dinner!

WHITE BEAN SOUP
Recipe on page 121

STUFFED VEGETABLES
Recipe on page 122

TOMATO-BRAISED PEAS & VEGETABLES

WHITE BEAN SOUP

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 10 MINUTES
COOK TIME 1 HOUR 45 MINUTES

250g dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight in water
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
1 onion, finely chopped
1 large carrot, cut into 5mm-thick rounds
1 celery stalk, cut into 1cm-thick slices
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tablespoon tomato paste
200g canned crushed tomatoes
2 fresh bay leaves
1 whole red apple (used as a flavour infuser; see note)
Pinch of chilli flakes (optional)

1. Drain and thoroughly rinse the beans, then place them in a large saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Drain and set aside.
2. Clean the pan, then place over low heat. Add the olive oil, onion, carrot, celery and sauté, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes to soften the vegetables. Add the garlic and tomato paste and cook for another 30 seconds.
3. Add the beans, crushed tomatoes, bay leaves, whole apple (with skin on), chilli flakes (if using), a pinch of salt and pepper and 1 litre of hot water to the pan. Cover and simmer for 1 hour. Remove the apple, taste and adjust the seasoning as required. Serve the soup in bowls, with an extra drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of pepper.
Note As the apple softens in the pan, it infuses a natural and subtle sweetness to the dish.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1682kJ/402cals. Protein 13.8g. Carbs 31.4g. Sat fat 3.3g. Fibre 16.2g. Sodium 629mg*

TOMATO-BRAISED PEAS & VEGETABLES

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME 40 MINUTES

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 carrots, cut into 1cm rounds
2 waxy potatoes (such as désirée or pontiac), cut into 4cm cubes
400g can crushed tomatoes
500g frozen peas
Handful of dill fronds, finely chopped
Crusty gluten-free rolls, to serve
Greek feta, to serve (optional)

1. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the onion and sauté, stirring occasionally, for about 8 minutes to soften. Add the garlic and tomato paste and cook for another 30 seconds.
2. Add the carrot, potato, crushed tomatoes and 2 cups of water to the pan and season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the peas and simmer for another 10 minutes or until the potato is nice and tender.
3. Take the pan off the heat and stir through the dill. Taste and adjust the seasoning as required. Serve with rolls and feta (if using) on the side.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1872kJ/448cals. Protein 11.1g. Carbs 28.8g. Sat fat 4.5g. Fibre 13.1g. Sodium 127mg* ►

STUFFED VEGETABLES

SERVES 6 **HANDS-ON TIME** 25 MINUTES
COOK TIME 90 MINUTES

---

6 large tomatoes
4 small capsicums (various colours)
Sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 small onion, diced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
200g beef mince
½ cup medium-grain rice
1 teaspoon dried oregano, plus extra for sprinkling
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
Handful of flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped
Handful of dill fronds, finely chopped
Handful of mint leaves, finely chopped
2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into wedges

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan-forced). Slice off the top quarter of each tomato and capsicum to create a lid.
2. Set aside the lids and scoop out the tomato flesh with a spoon (be careful not to break the shell). Blitz the flesh in a food processor to make a tomato purée and set aside. Remove the core of each capsicum and clean the inside of the shell. Place the vegetable shells upright in a roasting tin and season lightly with salt and pepper.
3. To make the filling, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium-low heat. Add the onion and a pinch of salt and sauté, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes to soften. Add the garlic and cook for a further 30 seconds. Add the mince to the pan and brown for 2–3 minutes, breaking it up with a wooden spoon.
4. Stir in the rice and cook, stirring occasionally, for a minute so it toasts (this prevents it from turning soggy). Add the reserved tomato purée, oregano, cinnamon and allspice. Let the mixture simmer and reduce for 5 minutes.
5. Remove the pan from the heat and stir through the herbs. Taste and adjust the seasoning as required. Spoon the filling into the vegetable shells until roughly three-quarters full (allow some room for the rice to expand). Place the lids neatly on the vegetables and sit the potato wedges between the vegetables to help them stay upright.
6. Sprinkle extra oregano over potato. Drizzle the remaining oil over the vegies and pour 1 cup of water down the side of the tin to help cook the potatoes. Tightly seal the tin with foil and bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 45 minutes or until the vegies are golden and the rice is tender.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1695kJ/406cals. Protein 14g. Carbs 31.6g. Sat fat 4.6g. Fibre 7.1g. Sodium 34mg*

CHICKPEA SOUP

SERVES 6 **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME 90 MINUTES

300g dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in water
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 celery stalks, finely chopped
2 carrots, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 fresh bay leaves
1 tablespoon thyme leaves
Juice of 1 large lemon
Handful of flat-leaf parsley leaves or dill fronds, finely chopped

1. Drain and thoroughly rinse the chickpeas. Set aside. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, add the onion, celery and carrot and add a pinch of salt and sauté, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes to soften the vegetables.
2. Stir in the garlic, bay leaves, thyme and a pinch of black pepper and cook for another 30 seconds. Add the chickpeas to the pan, pour in 2 litres of water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer, skimming off any white froth that rises to the surface, for 1½ hours or until the chickpeas are tender. Remove from the heat.
3. Transfer three cups of soup to a food processor, add the lemon juice and blitz to form a purée (if you prefer a thicker consistency, you can simply purée more soup). Stir the purée back into the soup to thicken it. Taste and adjust the seasoning as required. Spoon the soup into bowls, scatter on the chopped herbs, add a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and serve.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1600kJ/383cals. Protein 13.3g. Carbs 26.3g. Sat fat 3g. Fibre 12.6g. Sodium 39mg*

Edited extract from *Gluten-Free Mediterranean* by Helen Tzouganatos (Plum, $44.99). Photography by Jeremy Simons

GLUTEN-FREE MEDITERRANEAN
HELEN TZOUGANATOS

CHICKPEA SOUP

Prevention Profiled

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FACE
TWO MINUTES TO PEEL & POLISH
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Natural Magic Anti-Ageing Cream from New Nordic moisturises, protects and repairs skin to provide an anti-ageing effect with a radiant glow while reducing the appearance of wrinkles. The day-to-night intense moisturiser contains fermented pomegranate and astaxanthin, which contribute to firmer, younger-looking skin. Find out more at newnordic.net.au

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MAGICAL WONDER OIL
SWEET DREAMS
HAPPY DAYS
SNIFFLE SNUFFLE

New kids on the block

Is bath and bedtime for your child turning into a chore? Capture their imagination with Natio Kids range of bath and body products (they'll love the cute labels) designed to make bath and bedtime fun for all. Natio Kids products are Australian made, dermatologically tested and suitable for toddlers right through to tweens. See natio.com.au

Wild dreams

Fancy waking up to a tiger outside your bedroom window (don't worry, it's reinforced glass), fine dining alongside the king of the jungle or feeding a giraffe from your balcony? Then get up close to some of the world's most amazing animals while in luxurious five-star accommodation at Jamala Wildlife Lodge in Canberra. Choose from either a Jungle Bungalow, a Giraffe Treehouse or the beautiful safari uShaka Lodge. With all meals, dinner drinks, guided zoo tour and more included, it's a super deal. See jamalawildlifelodge.com.au

Warm embrace

EMBRACE
GUY SEBASTIAN

Award-winning Aussie singer-songwriter Guy Sebastian has just launched his first ever fragrance, Embrace For Her EDP. The fiery red bottle opens with top notes of fruity red currant, davana and lychee, with middle notes of red peony, rose damascene and jasmine grandiflorum before transcending into bottom notes of warm amber woods, patchouli Indonesia and spicy vanilla orchid. Available exclusively from Chemist Warehouse. Visit chemistwarehouse.com.au

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5 myths about pet health

Fuzzy falsehoods about your four-legged friends can prevent you from taking the best care of them. Here's what we know.

BY KATE ROCKWOOD

MYTH #1

A WARM, DRY NOSE MEANS YOUR DOG IS SICK

THE TRUTH While a cold, wet nose is more typical for dogs, a warm, dry snout doesn't mean your pup is under the weather, says veterinarian Alison Creighton. It could just be a result of the actual weather. "A healthy dog, for example, might have a dry nose after lying in the sun or being exposed to heavy winds," Alison says. But, if your dog's nose is dry and the skin around it is red and irritated, or if there are other symptoms like lethargy or loss of appetite, call your vet, as this can indicate a medical problem like dehydration. And don't assume that a cold, wet nose means all is well. "The best way to monitor your dog's health is to keep an eye out for any symptoms or behaviours that aren't typical for them," Alison says.

MYTH #2

URINE OUTSIDE THE LITTER BOX JUST MEANS A CAT IS MARKING ITS TERRITORY

THE TRUTH For healthy neutered or spayed cats, spraying outside the litter box is uncommon: If a cat is fixed before puberty, the chance of their spraying can be reduced by 90 per cent in males and 95 per cent in females, says veterinarian Dr Jennifer Bruns. If your kitty is fixed, missing the litter box likely has nothing to do with marking territory, especially if it's new behaviour. Maybe you need to clean the box more often or your cat is stressing over a new pet or baby or even a noise in your house. But urine issues can be a sign of potentially serious illnesses, like kidney disease or a urinary tract infection, Dr Bruns says. If your cat is peeing more often, straining to pee or doing it outside the box, tell your vet. "Your vet will likely do blood tests and a urinalysis to help find the root issue and determine the best course of action to get the cat's health back on track," Dr Bruns says.

MYTH #3

DOGS EAT GRASS WHEN THEY HAVE AN UPSET STOMACH

THE TRUTH Although many dog owners see a connection between pets not feeling well and their eating grass, an upset stomach isn't always what drives a dog to munch on the green stuff – and sometimes it's the grass itself that causes them to throw up, says veterinarian Angela Hoover. There are many other possibilities for why dogs eat grass, including boredom, enjoyment and, some believe, their natural instinct to scavenge. Still, it's best to discourage the habit if you can, especially beyond your own backyard: The grass could be chemically treated or contaminated with parasites from another animal's faeces. Yuck.

MYTH #4

CATS DON'T NEED HELP KEEPING THEMSELVES CLEAN

THE TRUTH Most healthy, happy cats are natural groomers, but those who are older or sick, or have got into something really dirty, may need a bath (or a once-over with pet-safe cleaning wipes) now and again, Dr Bruns says. These kitties may also require regular brushing to reduce hairballs and matting, she adds. Additionally, all cats need their teeth brushed and their nails trimmed regularly. Try to brush your cat's teeth every day, but if that's not an option, there are wipes, treats and foods that can help with dental disease. Talk to your vet about good choices and ask about how often it's necessary to trim your cat's nails. Doing so regularly not only helps keep their paws healthy, but can also cut down on furniture scratches – a nice bonus – Dr Bruns adds.

MYTH #5

A DOG'S MOUTH IS CLEANER THAN A HUMAN'S MOUTH

THE TRUTH "Human and dog mouths are equally dirty," says Angela. Just as we do, dogs have hundreds of bacteria in their mouths, some good, some bad. The bacteria pasteurella, for example, is the biggest culprit behind why a bite or scratch from a dog or cat gets infected. Doggie smooches are fine, Angela says, but be careful not to let a dog lick your wounds or theirs. All that bacteria is bad news for your dog's dental health as well: At least 80 per cent of dogs over age three have periodontal disease, research shows. Angela recommends brushing their teeth regularly with a dog-specific toothbrush and toothpaste. While once a day is best, aim for three times a week at minimum. Dog not playing ball? Talk to your vet for other options or try enzymatic washes or dental treats that help clear tartar off dogs' teeth, Angela suggests.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Shelly Horton

The TV host and menopause campaigner, 49, shares what she's learnt about life.

1 **MY NON-NEGOTIABLE MORNING RITUAL IS...** sleeping until the very last minute and then getting up straight away. I've never hit the snooze button in my life. I don't understand people who do. They probably scrunch toilet paper, too – weirdos!

2 **WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN AT 40...** is that each year gets better and better. I'm turning 50 this year and I can't wait. I work hard, but I love my life.

3 **MENOPAUSE IS...** no longer taboo! My generation is refusing to suffer in silence like our mums did. I was part of the first parliamentary round table on menopause recently. Menopause symptoms can be severe (mine are), so we need funding for awareness campaigns.

4 **MY AMBITION IS...** for every workplace in Australia to be peri- and menopause friendly. About 10 per cent of women quit their jobs because of menopausal symptoms and that's such a waste of wonderful, experienced women often at the peak of their careers. The stigma of menopause needs to be smashed just like we did for mental health at work.

5 **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I DO HEALTH WISE IS...** go on a stupid walk for my stupid mental health.

6 **I'M HAPPIEST WHEN...** doing a sunset walk on the beach with my husband and three rescue dogs.

7 **CONFIDENCE CAN BE...** taught. I run confidence courses and, after just one session, people walk away feeling 10 feet tall. I feel like a proud mother hen.

8 **I ALWAYS SAY...** remember the 5 Ps: Prior Preparation Prevents Piss-poor Performance!

9 **WHAT IS INSPIRING ME RIGHT NOW...** are celebrities around the world openly talking about perimenopause and menopause – people like Naomi Watts, Pip Edwards, Julia Morris, Drew Barrymore, Oprah Winfrey, Alison Brahe-Daddo and, of course, me!

10 **BEING A GOOD FRIEND MEANS...** being honest, kind and making each other laugh until a little bit of wee comes out.

Shelly is the co-founder (along with Dr Ginni Mansberg) of dontsweatit.com.au, which aims to make all Aussie workplaces peri and menopause friendly. She also runs shellshockedmedia.com, where she teaches presenting, media training and confidence.

COMPILED BY ANDREA DUVALL. PHOTOGRAPHY: SHELLSHOCKED MEDIA

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